A

MEMORANDUM

WRITTEN AFTER

A Tour through the Tea Districts

OF

EASTERN BENGAL,

IN

1864-65.

BY

W. NASSAU LEES, LL. D.

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Origin of the Tour; interview with the Viceroy.

In the early part of last cold season, having, by thirty-three consecutive months of labor, become entitled to the privilege of taking three consecutive months of leave, I resolved to spend it in making a tour through the tea districts of Eastern Bengal. The day before my departure from Calcutta, I breakfasted with the Governor General of India, and His Excellency did me the honor to evince an interest in my approaching tour, and to express a hope that I would direct my particular attention to the condition and treatment of the coolies employed on tea plantations, and acquaint him with my impressions on my return. On this subject His Excellency expressed himself with both force and feeling, stating it to be his most earnest desire to do every thing that lay in his power to forward the interests of tea planters, provided he was satisfied that the laborer was well paid and fairly treated in every respect, and that he was not compelled to live in localities that are manifestly unhealthy. But regarding the treatment of their laborers by tea planters, His Excellency observed that he was in considerable perplexity, because some cases had come before him with attending circumstances of a very reprehensible character, in which, moreover, it appeared to him that, as is usual in such cases, the "whole story" had not been told; and therefore, though he was prepared to aid the *European* planter in every legitimate way, he was equally solicitous for the welfare of the

Native laborer, and no pressure, however strong, would compel him to sanction any Laws which would place additional power in the hands of the former, unless he was fully satisfied in his own mind that that power would not be abused. And these sentiments, His Excellency said, he would be glad if, during my tour, I would convey to the planters, whose co-operation in any measure of labor reform he deemed essential to its success. I considered it my duty here to acquaint the Governor General that I was myself carrying on very large operations in tea, and was very deeply interested in what was commonly called the "labor question;" but he added that that was precisely the reason why he had been induced to ask me to look into the matter, because, sharing the confidence of both tea planters and Government, and going amongst the former as one of themselves, I would be looked upon with less suspicion than one sent officially by Government to report on the question.

Object of this Memorandum.

2. On my return from Assam I duly waited on Sir John Lawrence, and acquainted him with my impressions on the subject in which he was interested; but as the welfare of English Capitalists, tea planters, and the laborers on tea plantations, both local and imported, are intimately bound up with many questions of an administrative and economic nature, which could not be treated of in a half hour's conversation, I have recorded my views in the following Memorandum, which, if not interesting, will, I trust, in some measure prove instructive. *I have only to add, that I have expressed myself with the full freedom of a private traveller, my chief endeavour being, to divest myself of all bias, either as a servant of the State, in favor of Government policy, or as a tea planter, in favor of individual or special interests.*

Departure.

3. There is no road from Calcutta to Assam, and though it would be possible by a circuitous route to reach that outlying Province by land, the difficulties of the way are so great and so numerous that no one thinks of attempting it. The highway to Assam is the River Bramahputra, and the port of embarkation Kooshtea, the present terminus of the Eastern Bengal Railway, which is about 100 miles from Calcutta. To Kooshtea, therefore, I proceeded on the 4th of December last (1864), and left it on board the India General Steam Navigation Company's Steamer *Rajmahal* on the 6th of that month. She had a flat lashed on each side, both of which were fitted up for coolies, and half the steamer's upper deck also, was set apart for the same purpose, the three vessels carrying about 500 coolies.

4. The Bramahputra is a mighty stream, requiring a steamer of considerable power to make headway against the immense volume of water it carries along with it. The mean velocity of the current in the rains is between 5 and 6 feet per second, and in the dry weather between 3 and 4 feet per second; but, during the cold weather, the lesser force of the current is compensated for by the shortness of the days, which, through the prevalence of the dense fogs which overhang the river at this season, and frequently prevent the steamers from getting underway until 9 or 10 o'clock each morning, are rendered shorter still. For a lengthy period, therefore, casting anchor each day at sunset, the traveller to Assam must ascend this great river, passing through a flat uninteresting country, until he reaches Jogi-gopa, which may be considered the entrance to the "Valley of Assam." Here the spurs of the Garrow and lower Bhútiah Hills converge, and about Gwálpára come so close to the windings of the great river, that it seems to the traveller as if the prettily wooded peaks of the many spurs and little hills into which the mountain chain is here broken up, rose out of its bosom, presenting on the whole a *coup d' œil* not to be obtained on any other river in India, and not on very many perhaps in Europe.

The highway to Assam; picturesque entrance to the valley.

5. After ascending for days through miles of sand banks, bounded by low flat plains, the monotony of which was unbroken except by the interest to be derived from watching the shoals of alligators which, open-mouthed, lay basking in the sun, and the myriads of pelicans which stood, spectre-like, in great groups around them: this change of scenery was refreshing and agreeable. It was apparent that we had entered a new country,—a country very markedly distinct in its physical features, in its inhabitants, and its climate from that which we had left behind. But it took two days more to bring us to Gowhatty, the Capital of the Province, the whole voyage having occupied altogether twelve days, a period considerably longer than it takes, at the present time, to go from England to America; thus shewing that for all the purposes of the traveller and the tradesman, in short, for all the purposes of practical business, Gowhatty is further from Calcutta than New York, St. Petersburg, or Constantinople are from London.

Gowhatty farther from Calcutta than New York from London.

6. Before, however, entering on considerations of distance and space, which will be more properly treated of under another head, I shall give a brief sketch of the physical features of this

Physical features of the Province, boundaries, &c.

remote Province and its outlying boundaries, as necessary to a right understanding of many difficult problems regarding its economic administration which have of late occupied, and still, I believe, occupy the attention of Government and the public.

7. What is usually called the Province of Assam is a long somewhat fiddle-shaped valley formed by the eastern extremity of the great chain of the Himalayas, and another and far lesser chain of hills which thrown inward, as it were, runs parallel to it, and stretches westward till it reaches the Bramahputra, north of Dacca. These boundary lines, if I may call them so, are broken up into a series of hills, forming, on the North, sometimes as many as four or five distinct ranges, which gradually recede, till the highest reaches an altitude of from eight to ten thousand feet, the snow-clad peaks of the gigantic and sombre Himalayas as they tower high up towards the heavens, closing in the view. The lower ranges take their names from the tribes who inhabit them, which, proceeding from West to East on the North and North-East are, the Bhútiahs, the A'kas, the Duflas, the Míris, the A'bors, and the Mishmís; and on the South and South-East the Singfús, the Nágás, the Khássias, and the Gáros. About fifty miles North-East of Suddiah our most Northern and Eastern Station is where the range takes its bend, the double line of hills forming a vast amphitheatre designed, in effect, to give egress to the immense volume of water thrown off from these mountain barriers, and carried back to the ocean by the Bramahputra, which, swelled by its *sixty* tributaries, many of them themselves great rivers, in the rains assumes such gigantic proportions that the valley through which it flows, seems little else than its bed. No attempt of late years has been made to restrain this apparently uncontrollable stream, which, except where opposed by natural barriers, as at Kuliabar, Bishnath, Tezpúr, Singri, &c., has flowed where it listed, flooding the country for miles on either side of its uncertain and shifting course; throwing back and damming, as it were, the minor rivers, and thus rendering the valley, by its alluvial deposits, one of the most fertile, but unfortunately,—through the miasma arising from the action of a tropical sun on the decayed vegetation which it leaves behind, for some months of the year,—one of the most unhealthy in India.

Assam the natural home of the tea plant; the indigenous Assam plant, the original species.

8. But constant evaporation, an abundant supply of rain, and dense fogs and mists, render the atmosphere moist, and the temperature of this valley comparatively cool, the soil on the high and well drained land beneath the surface mould

is, for the most part, friable or granular, sometimes red, sometimes yellow, and sometimes even white, but almost always rich; and it is these characteristics combined which render the Valley of Assam and the neighbouring Provinces so peculiarly congenial to the tea plant, of which it appears to be the natural and primitive home. It is right to observe that I have no well supported data for this latter assumption, but I have the simple facts that the tea tree grows wild in the primeval forests of Assam, and I have not any very distinct information of the wild tea of China; that this wild, or, as it is commonly called, indigenous Assam tea plant, attains the dignity of a tree, while the China species is a shrub; that the China species, of which there seems to be very many varieties, improves much when planted in favorable localities in Assam, assimilating, in some instances, to the plant commonly, but erroneously, called the hybrid, but which, in all probability, is merely a variety of the indigenous; and that the latter, whether we regard its greater size, its more rapid growth and more abundant yield, and the finer texture of its leaf, is undoubtedly the superior order of the plant. For these reasons I venture to think that the indigenous Assam plant is the original species of the tea plant.

Absence of reliable statistics; vastness of the wastes; scantiness of the population.

9. Accurate statistical information ought to be the back-bone of every comprehensive report on any country, for in very many respects it is deductions from accurate statistics alone that can lead us to sound conclusions, and consequently it is by no means easy to predicate anything, with certainty, regarding a Province for which such cannot be ascertained. The Valley of Assam has never been surveyed; its people have never been numbered. Partial attempts have been made at surveys and a census was taken in 1855-56; but for both equally, the ways and the means in every sense of the words were wanting; and in setting down the area of Assam at from 48,000 to 50,000 square miles, and the population at from 1,500,000 to 1,750,000 souls, I think it proper to observe that I adopt merely the estimates of the Civil Authorities, which can be little better than guess work. Assuming, however, that these figures approximate, remotely let it be, to the truth, they will give a population of from 30 to 35 souls to the square mile, a population sufficiently scant to justify the received opinion on the subject. At the same time it is not to be supposed that the population is evenly distributed throughout the country; vast tracts of lands, some 6,000,000 acres it is said, are covered with dense jungle, tenanted solely by wild animals, leaving the existing population scattered

	Square Miles.
* Total area ...	34,345
Cultivation Area...	2,252
	Rupees
Revenue (nett)	7,54,808
Population ...	12,01,151
Population per square mile ...	32

MILLS' REPORT, 1853.

over but a very limited area of the whole Province.* Most strangers, who have hitherto visited Assam, have steamed up the Bramahputra and steamed down again, and as the character of this river renders residence in the neighbourhood of its banks impossible, an impression has been created that the Province is almost denuded of inhabitants. But this impression is altogether erroneous. The District of Gwálpára is very fairly, and parts of Kámrúp and Durrung are very thickly, populated. The District of Nowgong on each side of the Kullung River has a teeming population, while in the immediate neighbourhood of Golaghát, Jorhát, Síbságar and Díbrughur, the population cannot be said to be very sparse.

Cry for labor, not attributable solely to want of population.

10. I do not then attribute the cry that has come up from Assam for labor to till the ground which European Capitalists are prepared to reclaim solely to the want of population; but to that cause, combined with many other causes, which it will be my business carefully to examine as I proceed with this Memorandum, for I can conceive no state of things more prejudical to the welfare of a country and the prosperity of its people, than that vast tracts of rich and highly productive land should remain in the possession of wild beasts, when capital has been accumulated for its cultivation, and people exist in sufficient numbers to effect this desirable end. That the population of Assam is sufficient to bring all the waste lands of the Province under cultivation is notoriously not a fact; but it is most certainly sufficient to accomplish very much more in that respect than it has hitherto done, and though many of the causes are attributable to the characteristics of the people themselves, others, and amongst them perhaps these very characteristics, may be traced, I think, to causes less difficult of control, and none possibly more powerful than want of knowledge of the circumstances of the Province, and the character and condition of its people. It is a common idea, adopted perhaps more generally by Englishmen than by the people of any other country, to suppose that the principles of good government are the same all over the world; and in this supposition there may not be any great amount of error, but it is a fatal error,—an error which, without being accused of any attempt to dogmatize, I may say has cost perhaps more money and bloodshed in India than any other, and the evil effects of which meet the traveller at every turn in Assam,—to imagine that principles, *in their applica-*

tion to peoples, are the same all over the world, and need no adaptation. If, therefore, through the means of this imperfect Memorandum, I can, without being misunderstood, convey to those whose desire, and to those whose interest, it is that this outlying Province of British India shall flourish and prosper, a better knowledge of the peoples who inhabit it, and a clearer insight into the whole circumstances of the country than they at present possess, I shall not have wasted my time.

Divisions and characteristics of the people.

11. And first I would observe that the peoples of Assam are not like Hindustánis, nor yet like their neighbours, the Bengálís, though some of them may partake perhaps of a few of their characteristics. The population may be separated into three divisions, the Assamese and Hindus, the Cacháris and Lálungs, and the very numerous hill tribes who inhabit the border mountains and hills.

The Assamese.

12. The Assamese are at present a weak, degenerate race, as indolent as they are lazy, and under the mild, or as they no doubt consider it the weak rule, by which they are now governed, as insolent as they are indolent. Debauched in the extreme, addicted, amongst other vices, to the immoderate use of the most demoralizing of known drugs, *opium*, this people seem to live in a great measure but for its consumption, for they determinately refuse to do more work than is just sufficient to pay for it and their rent, and to keep them in rice. The result is that they beget a puny race of children, a large proportion of whom, from want of stamina, never live to reach maturity, and a still larger proportion of whom are carried off, if not in childhood, in youth, by the ravages of dysentery, small-pox, and malarious fevers. Thus population is checked, and the dense jungle and forests, with their attendant evils, dominate over the races of the Valley, who are unequal to subdue them. Time was when the Valley of Assam, if not densely populated, contained a fair proportion of the human race; but those days are gone. For miles have I travelled through immense grass jungle from 10 to 20 feet high, which was once covered with cultivation, and where every now and then the old villager, whom I employed as a guide, pointed out to me the site of some village, no traces of which were left to mark the former existence of man. Time was, if report speaks true, when the Assamese, if never a highly energetic and enterprizing race, had at least the virtues of honesty and truthfulness, but whether contact with their neighbours, or contamination from intercourse with our courts of justice be the cause, they are

said to possess neither now. Time was when the Valley of Assam was interspersed with tanks and intersected by bunds and roads worthy of the Romans, all made by the labor of its people; but the tanks have disappeared in thick jungle, the bunds have been washed away, and the roads have been so neglected as to be recognized only where the stupendous embankments remain, land-marks to recall the vitality of the rule of the Rajas of Assam, and that energy of the people, whether natural or forced, which we now look for in vain. The whole trade of the country is now in the hands of the *Khayahs*, a Márwári or foreign race, who grind the people to their hearts' content, and the impression left on my mind after a three months' tour in Assam, a tour which was conducted not on the muddy surface of the Brahmaputra, but on elephants and ponies, and which extended from the foot of the Míkir hills near Nowgong on the South, to the foot of the Bhútiah hills in Durrung on the North, and from the banks of the River Rhotas on the East to the banks of the River Díhing on the West,—the impression, I repeat, left on my mind was, that a more uninteresting, a more indolent, a more ignorant and a more degenerate race it had seldom been my lot to see than the opium-eating Assamese proper, with whom I may class also the Bengálís who, from associations and habit, can with difficulty be distinguished from them. To one having property in the Valley, property dependent, above all other kinds of property, for its condition on the quantity and quality of the labor available to work it, the reflections arising from the contemplation of such a state of things could not be pleasant, and consequently the degeneracy which met my view on all sides had a depressing effect.

The Cacharis.

13. The Cacháris again present a pleasing contrast to the Assamese in *physique*, appearance and characteristics; and that they are more stalwart is indeed evidenced by their having ousted the Assamese and forcibly occupied a considerable part of the Province. Strong and able-bodied, they are capital workers, and, when necessity calls, are willing to leave their homes and migrate in search of employment. Until tea gardens were opend in the neighbourhood of their homes, hundreds of them went yearly to Upper Assam and took service on the tea gardens there, many of which to the present day are worked solely by Cacháris. The Jorhát Company's garden at Numálighur has from four to five hundred Cacháris located upon it. The Assam Company have about 1,000 Cacháris on their gardens; about Síbságur, Mr. Todd's and Colonel Holroyd's gardens which are among the best in Assam, and all those gardens lately opened up in Durrung have been

worked almost wholly by this class of laborers. The Cácháris drank and still drink ardent spirits; but, as a rule, they were not addicted to the use of opium, though I very much fear that of late they have shewn a tendency to acquire the pernicious habit.

Hill Tribes.

14. Of the tribes inhabiting the neighbouring hills I can say, I fear, but little. They are so numerous and diversified, and so interesting, at once, to the philosopher, the philologist, and the ethnologist, that to give any account of them worthy of the name would require infinitely more information than I or any one else possess, and occupy alone a considerably sized volume. Viewing this portion of the subject, however, from the stand-point of the Indian ruler, it is, especially at the present moment, one too grave in importance to be passed over in silence. I have before mentioned the names of the tribes of Assam, and I repeat the principal tribes in the margin. None of these tribes can be called a civilized race of people, and none consequently will venture to meet our troops in the open plain. Few of them possess or know how to use fire-arms, some of them shewing a childish, if not a superstitious, dread of them, and others again shewing some little alarm at water. But, if none of these tribes can be considered dangerous in the field, and most of them are contemptible as enemies, all of them, even the most insignificant, may prove exceedingly troublesome neighbours. Thus the Chulikáta, or *croppee* Mishmís, a tribe numbering no more than 5,000 souls, of both sexes, inhabiting a tract of the hill country on the North-Eastern Frontier, extending for about 50 miles from the source of the Bísa River in the West to the source of the Digaro in the East, have been very troublesome. From the year 1854 to the year 1857, I am informed that they made no less than six raids into the plains close to one of our military posts, killing twenty-six and wounding six (three mortally) inoffensive villagers, and carrying off fifteen British subjects into captivity. For the first two years they committed these outrages under cover of the darkness of night; but, emboldened by impunity, in 1857, they descended into the plains in open day.

Bhútiahs; dependent and independent.

A'Kas.	Singfús.
Duflas.	Nágás.
Míris.	Míkirs.
Abors.	Khásias.
Mishmís.	Jaintias.
Kámptís.	Gáros.

The Bhutiahs.

15. The most peaceful, perhaps, of our neighbours are the Bhútiahs. Prior to 1840 they gave a very great deal of trouble, raids and dacoities being so numerous that our relations seem to have been most unsatisfactory. But this state of things arose from some confusion of rights in the Dooars, or lands at the foot of the hills. In 1841, however, the British Government conceded their rights, and

purchased them for an annual payment of Rs. 10,000 a year, and since that time, until the other day when we invaded their country, the Bhútiahs have not given us, *in Assam at least*, any thing approaching the same cause of offence, as the Singfús, the Abors, or the Nágás; nor have they been considered so formidable as enemies.

The Singfus.

16. The Singfús, who were once a strong tribe, are of a peculiarly treacherous and vindictive character. If one of their number is killed by the fall of a tree, they hack it in pieces; if one is drowned in a river, they fire arrows into the water,—a method of wreaking vengeance which I allude to as it reminds me forcibly of what is related by Herodotus of Xerxes, the great Commander of the Persian hosts, who ordered the Hellespont to be scourged with a hundred lashes and fettered, because a violent storm carried away the bridge he was building to cross it. But since 1839 the tribe has been greatly weakened, and can now number no more than a few hundred fighting-men.

The Abors.

17. Not so the Abors; they are a powerful and courageous tribe, having little fear of fire-arms, and in 1858, became so bold as to descend into the plains within a few miles of the chief military station of Upper Assam, firing villages and slaughtering and wounding the inhibitants, men, women, and children, to the number of about 30. A small military force, consisting of a detachment of 100 men under a Lieutenant, was sent into their country; but after suffering a discomfiting defeat, partly from the *insufficiency of the coercing force, and partly owing to a want of concord between the Civil and Military authorities*, it was obliged to beat an ignominious retreat, and it subsequently became necessary to send a very much larger force under Colonel Hannay, which brought these savages to reason. Yet it would not seem to have cowed them; for, in 1861, we find them again firing and plundering villages within a few miles of Dibrúghur.

The Nagas and tribes of Nagas.

18. But the Nágás appear to be the most numerous, and of the hill tribes by far the most difficult, we have had to deal with. There are four or five divisions of these savages, which are frequently at feud amongst themselves; and in these internal broils it has been the misfortune, I think, of the authorities in Assam too frequently, and, as we were not prepared to hold their hills, perhaps unnecessarily, to get mixed up. These strong races occupy the entire line of hills stretching along the Southern frontier from the river Dehing on the North-East to the borders of what used to be Tuli Ram's country on the West, now called

North Cáchár. People who may be supposed to know more of them than I do, distinguish among them many tribes*; but perhaps all these tribes may be classed under three heads, the first occupying the lower, the second the higher, ranges of hills, and the third the hills stretching along the Dunsíri River, and away towards North Cáchár. I have seldom, in India, seen stronger, more athletic, or more powerfully made men than the Nágás I met with in the plains about Nowgong. Of a square build, flat faced, broad shouldered and brawny limbed, they seemed to me to be all bone and muscle, and apparently admirably fitted to make stout and able-bodied laborers, and possibly stalwart and brave soldiers, were it not that they have a wholesome dread of musketry, the fire of which, it is said, they could with difficulty be led to face. No less than ten so-called "military expeditions" have been made into the Nágá Hills; but most of them consisted of a subaltern's party of sepoys, and little permanent success attended any of them. The most promising measure seems to have been the introduction of a body of friendly Kúkís armed with muskets, into North Cáchár, between the Nágás and the plains, and since then, or for some years, they have not given any cause for serious alarm.[a]

* Bar or Abor Nágás.
Lota Nágás.
Rengmah Nágás.
Angami Nágás.
Tokhofen Nágás.
Kutcha Nágás.

19. But our relations with the Abors and the Nágás and most of the tribes on the North-East Frontier of the valley are at best extremely unsatisfactory; and looking to the number of Europeans scattered throughout the districts of Luckimpúr, Síbságur, and Nowgong, many of them in isolated positions,† the great value of the properties they superintend, and the very limited military force located in the Province, the situation is one which certainly demands the attention of Government. It is true, as stated, that since 1861 these tribes have not given much trouble; but while writing this memorandum, information has reached me that the Nágás have again commenced their raids in the neighbourhood of Nowgong, and have cut up some villagers and carried others away captive. Further, I know that when I was in Assam a hundred armed Nágás came down to a plantation of the East India Tea Cmpany between Golaghát and Síbságur, and threatened the manager, telling him that nothing could prevent their firing his factory and destroying his plantation any night

† One of the Assam Company's plantations is actually in the Nágá Hills, and is worked entirely by Nágás. This plantation was lately sold to the Northern Assam Tea Company.

a NOTE.—Since the above was written, the Nágás have made repeated raids into the plains, and unless some efficient means are taken to punish or restrain them, they will give more serious trouble.

if they chose it; and that six hundred Duflas descended from the hills North of Bishnáth, and remained some time encamped in the plains to watch the result of the Bhútíah campaign. There is no doubt that there was at the time an uneasy feeling among the tribes along the whole North-East Frontier, and I believe that any serious miscarriage at Díwángíri a second time would have resulted in inroads into the valley which we undeniably had not the means of checking at hand.

Other Tribes.

20. The other tribes, A'Kas, Duflas, Kámptís, Míris, Míkirs, Khásias, Jaintias, Gáros, not being a present source of much uneasiness, do not need special notice. One of the tribes of A'Kas (Kuppa-Chôr or cotton stealers) gave some little trouble under a marauder called the Tághi Raja; but their number is insignificant. The Duflas are numerous and powerful enough to commit serious depredations; but they are satisfied with their black mail or small money payments, and some are taking service on tea plantations. The Míris are the slaves of the Abors, and it is to re-establish their right of property over the former that the latter have often rebelled. They are a peaceful people. But the most peaceful of all the tribes of Assam are the Míkirs, and they seem always to have been so, as many of their ancient national songs recount the wrongs they have continually suffered, always representing the tribe as an oppressed people. They are, however, migratory and mischievous, and have destroyed immense forests of valuable timber during the last few years to grow cotton, for the land of which they have not paid a rupee of revenue. They pay a house tax of one rupee a house per annum. Of the Jaintias we had experience in the late campaign. Both the Khásias and Gáros are to a great degree peaceful and industrious. The former give us iron and potatoes; the latter considerable quantities of cotton, and their intercourse with the plains as traders is of the highest importance. The Gáros have a nasty habit, however, of cutting up villagers to possess themselves of their skulls to bury with their dead. Both the Khásia and Gáro Hills are rich in the extreme, and admirably adapted for colonization, but the tribes are rude and superstitious savages.

The elements of prosperity.

21. Having now given a brief outline of the physical features of the Province of Assam, and a somewhat meagre account of the races who inhabit it, I shall pass on to the considerations of those elements upon which their condition depends, and first, as that with which is primarily connected the welfare of peoples and States, I shall take up *Land.*

Land in Assam; three classes.

22. Land in Assam may be primarily divided into three great classes, Hill, Alluvial, and Diluvial, the distinction being made with reference to the lie of the land as to the high-water mark. Taken as a whole the quality of the land in the Valley of Assam, I should think, is second to none in the whole world. I have travelled for miles on an elephant ten feet high, where the grass or reed jungle was from four to six feet above my head, and of such strength that the noble animal, at times, had hard work to push his way through it. It requires no further demonstration to prove that the soil which could raise and support such a jungle must possess powers of production unknown in countries less favored by nature than is this rich and noble Province.

Revenue system under the Rajas of Assam.

23. Under the rule of the Rajas of Assam the land was always considered the *property* of the Sovereign. The people had no rights in the soil, the land was parcelled out to them under certain regulations according to the will of their ruler, who conferred a certain allowance on the subject in lieu of, and as remuneration for, services rendered to the Crown, to the great Officers of State, or to the community. From this service none but slaves and the servants of temples were exempt; and should the services of any not be required by Government, their land was not taken from them, but they were subject to a capitation tax. Such was the general principle; but the revenue system, perhaps as a measure of expediency, would appear to have varied in different parts of Assam.

Novel composition with the hill tribes regarding rights in the soil of the plains.

24. Thus, the greater portion of the Durrung District was farmed out to a member of the Kuch Behar Raja's family, and diverse and singular arrangements were entered into with several of the hill tribes, by which they were allowed certain rights and privileges in the soil of the plains. The most extensive of these appears to have been the rights conceded to, or more probably usurped by, the Bhútiahs of occupying and collecting the entire rent of the lands at the foot of the hills North of Kámrúp called Duárs* for the payment of a small annual tribute, consisting of cows' tail, ponies, gold dust, blankets, &c. To other Bhútiahs† also were conceded similar rights in the Duárs of Durrung, subject to the singular provision, that for four out of the twelve months of the year, they were to be under the rule of the Assam Rajas. The Duflas, the

* Gurkulea Duár.
Banska Duár.
Chapagari.
Chapacamur Bijni.

† Thibetan.
Debengeah
Sath Rajas of Kuriapara and Sherquon.

Abors, the Singfús, and other tribes received, or forced contributions from the *ryots* occupying the lands neighbouring their hills, and the Nágás and Míkirs, which latter are a very peaceful race, had certain lands and fisheries allotted to them rent-free, and were allowed to levy contributions of fish, cloth, and other things from the ryots. These concessions on the part of the Rajas may have come down with traditionary custom, and may have arisen out of rights in the plains originally wrested from the hill men; or with more reason they may be looked upon as black mail paid to purchase immunity from those plundering raids, which the relative *richness* of the plains and *poverty* of the hills, the *strength* of the hill men and *weakness* of the ryots combined to invite. But it is not into the origin of these circumstances that I wish to enquire; my object in alluding to them in treating this portion of the subject is, that I think it desirable that the ancient existence of these privileges, be they rights or concessions, should not be ignored in considering our relations or adjudicating differences with the hill tribes, to the absolute existence of some of whom they are a necessity.

Introduction of a Land tax.

25. Again, the ancient rule of exacting personal service in lieu of a grant or allotment of land, was not equally maintained. When we drove out the Burmese conquerors, it was in force in Upper Assam, but as the Mahommedans encroached on the Assamese possessions, they gradually introduced, as far as they could, their own system, and a land tax, or a tax on the produce of the land, was in a great measure substituted for personal servitude. In addition to the regular allowance of land in lieu of personal service (called *goamattee*) each man was permitted to take about half as much again for his house or garden, but on the other hand he had to pay to the State a virtual poll tax, varying in denomination according to its locality, of about one rupee, and he was charged one rupee a *pura* (an acre and a quarter) for all lands cultivated by him in excess of the regulation allowance. Artizans, and others again not cultivating land, paid from two to three rupees taxes in money, or in the articles of their trade.

Taxation about 3 Rupees a head.

26. From the meagre information, however, to be obtained in or out of the Province, of the history, political and social, of the people of Assam, it is not very easy to arrive at a correct notion of the revenue system or systems, and the general principles of taxation which prevailed under the Ahom Raj; while for some years prior to our occupation the administration of the whole Province was in a state of utter confusion. It is nevertheless clear that there was no division of lands as regards

capabilities of the soil, nor did the State, on a similar principle of equity, claim a share in the produce as was done in India in accordance with the institutes of Hindu law. On the contrary, it would seem that each adult was entitled to about three *puras* or three acres and three quarters of land, and if not rendering any personal service in lieu thereof, he was expected to pay to the State about Rs. 3, or something over 12½ annas an acre. But it must be borne in mind that, as above stated, the great principle of taxation in vogue under the Ahoms, that dynasty, supposed to be of Shán origin, which, with various vicissitudes, ruled over Assam for six or seven hundred years prior to 1826, was the exaction of personal servitude, and consequently the estimate here given can hardly be considered to assimilate a land tax under the ancient *régime*, but must be looked upon more as a valuation assumed, rather for purposes of comparison than any thing else.

First occupation by the British; deplorable circumstances of the country and wretched condition of the people.

27. Turning now to the existing *régime*, we find that on the first occupation of Assam by the British in 1826, the whole circumstances of the country were about as deplorable, and the condition of the people as wretched, as it is possible to conceive; and as the Government of Bengal was in a measure indirectly responsible for the desolation which then reigned throughout the Province, and the force of many of those circumstances is still in operation, at the risk of being tedious, I will take a very brief retrospect of the events which led up to our appearance in the Valley.

***Status quo ante;* Chohit pang fa, alias Gourinath.**

28. *Chohit pang fa* was one of the last of the Ahom or Shán Rajas of Assam. These Rajas had always a Hindu name by which they were generally better known than by their Assamese name, and *Chohit pang fa's* Hindu name was Gourináth.

His misfortunes.

29. Ascending the throne in *A. D.* 1780 at the early age of 14, he was then too young to exhibit any of the higher qualities of a ruler of men; and unfortunately advancing years did not develop them. Four years after his accession, the Múttuks, who inhabit the country about Díbrúghur, and were chiefly disciples of a religious leader called the Moammariah Gosain, for the third or fourth time raised the standard of rebellion, and after several campaigns, with varied success, succeeded in devastating half the country, and driving the Raja back to Gowhatty, the capital of Lower Assam. In 1788, however, he collected an overwhelming force and proceeded against them; but after a desperate engagement which is said to have lasted several days, he was compelled to retreat. In this strait he applied for

assistance to one Runsh, a farmer of Bengal Salt, who resided at Gwálpára. Runsh responded to the call, and supplied him with seven hundred Burkundazes, which he sent to the Bura Gohain, his Lieutenant at Jorehát. Strengthened by this reinforcement, the Lieutenant again hazarded a battle with the Muttúks, but without success. Runsh's 700 Burkundazes were cut to pieces. Gourináth, now in great distress, applied to the Raja of Munipúr, and he, though a very aged man, came to his assistance with 4,000 foot and 500 horse soldiers, but even this strong military force failed to turn the tide in his favor, for the Muttúks, *favored by the high grass, entrapped the horses in concealed pit-falls, cut up their riders, and dispersed the whole army with a loss, it is said, of some* 1,500 *men.* The Raja of Munipúr, with the remnant of his troops, returned discomfitted to his own country; and Gourináth fled to Gowhatty, but not to rest in peace. About this time the King of Durrung was deposed, and a relative, one Kishen Narain, mounted the *guddee;* but not satisfied with what he had got, or else thinking the time favorable, he attempted to possess himself of Kámrúp also, to which District he asserted a right, and subsequent enquiries established he had some claim. For this purpose he collected a large body of Bengal Burkundazes and advanced on Gowhatty.

Gourinath reduced to extremities, appeals to the Government of India, who assist him.

30. Deprived of all resources and threatened on all sides, the Raja Gourináth, finding himself in the position as he expressed it, of a "laden boat in the act of sinking," again applied to the Salt Agent, Runsh, but without success. Runsh's Burkundazes had been cut to pieces, and this time he was unable to give him any help. He applied, however, on his behalf to the well-known mercantile firm of Messrs. Colvin, Cowie and Co., (then Colvin, Bazett and Co.,) and the Raja of Assam sent a deputation composed of the deposed King of Durrung, and three other influential persons to solicit the interference of the British. He represented that large bodies of Hindustáni Sepoys, Sikh Fukírs, and others had enrolled themselves among the forces of his enemies, and he claimed the protection of the Indian Government on the ground that British subjects were aiding and abetting rebels in the devastation of his country. The grounds of the Raja's position were considered by Lord Cornwallis legitimate, and in the latter part of 1792 a regiment of sepoys, under Captain Welsh, entered the Province, arriving at Gowhatty the day after the Muttúks, having laid waste the whole country on the South bank of the river from Díbrúghur to Gowhatty, had driven the Raja out of his Capital, set fire to his house, and burned it to the ground.

Arrangements for the Settlement of the Province; death of Lord Cornwallis; repudiation of his policy, and relapse to the miseries of anarchy.

31. On the arrival of Captain Welsh he found the Province on the Southern bank of the Bramahputra in possession of the Muttocks, and on the Northern in possession of the King of Durrung, the Raja of Assam being nowhere. He successfully quelled the insurrections on both sides of the river, and finding the Raja a debauched and blood-thirsty tyrant, and quite unequal to the government of the country, he represented the circumstances to Lord Cornwallis, under whose instructions, with the full concurrence of the Burra Gohain and the leading men among the Assamese, he made an arrangement for the retention of a Brigade of British troops in Assam, for the payment of which the revenues of Lower Assam were pledged. This arrangement he represented as absolutely necessary to secure the peace of the Province, and protection to the people from the tyranny of their own ruler, as much as anything else, and good government to the country. But unfortunately, at this juncture, Lord Cornwallis, who had evinced the liveliest interest in the welfare of this Province, returned home, and the Government of Bengal devolved upon Sir John Shore. "With his government," says Mr. Robinson, "commenced a total change of measures towards Assam; and on the weakest of all pretences—the non-interference system—the whole people of Assam were delivered over to the tender mercies of their fatuous, bloody-minded Raja, and again plunged into the miseries of anarchy. Nor would the Bengal Government listen to any remonstrances of Captain Welsh, who begged to be allowed a short period to prepare the people for his departure, and to leave a small force behind him. He was ordered instantly to return to Bengal. The miseries this lamentable policy of the Bengal Government inflicted upon Assam may not be dwelt upon. The British Government were in a position to preserve order and good government to a then flourishing and populous kingdom; but their duty as the paramount power was neglected, and the result was the heaviest blow that British India has sustained, the drain of its finances, and the stoppage of all its internal improvements, caused by the Burmese war. Captain Welsh returned to Calcutta in July 1794."

Death of the King Gourinath.

32. Raja Gourináth shortly after died, having reigned fifteen years.

The new King, a puppet in the hand of a vicious Minister. He dies.

33. The affairs of the Province were not improved by this event. A new king was appointed, but he was an imbecile, and became a puppet in the hands of a vicious minister. He died in 1809, and was succeeded by his brother, Chunder Kant Singh.

His brother, Chunder Kant Singh, succeeds, and is twice deposed, and reinstated after an invasion of the Burmese with 30,000 men.

34. The first act of this king was to conspire to assassinate his minister, the Burra Gohain; but the minister getting intimation of it seized some of the conspirators, and the rest fled. Among them was the Bar Fúkan, who came to Calcutta and solicited the aid of the British on behalf of the new Raja. His application was rejected. He then addressed himself to an agent of the King of Ava who happened to be in Calcutta at the time, and his overtures being favorably received, he accompanied him back to Amarapúra, and shortly afterwards re-appeared in Upper Assam with an army of 14,000 Burmese and hill men; but the Raja's enemies having in the meantime dispersed, they returned to Burmah. Shortly afterwards the Bar Fúkan was put to death, the Raja was deposed, and another member of the royal family, Purrundhur Singh, was set up in his stead. But in the meantime the followers of the Bar Fúkan had fled to the Court of Ava and thrown themselves under the golden feet of the king. On their solicitation a powerful army, said to have been 30,000 strong, entered the Province, bore down all opposition, and having replaced the Raja on the throne, retired, leaving a small force to retain him in his position. Purrundhur Sing fled to Calcutta, and having repeatedly sought the aid of the British without success, tried to raise troops in Bhután to invade Assam.

The Raja intrigues and is deposed by the Burmese, who obtain strong reinforcements and threaten the British.

35. The Raja, however, finding that he was a mere cypher in the hands of the Burmese, soon became dissatisfied with his position, and commenced intriguing with the principal officers of State for a union of the entire strength of the country, with a view to drive the Burmese out of the Province. The Burmese, however, were beforehand. They deposed the Raja and expelled him from Assam, and set up another in his stead. This took place in 1820. The Raja, nevertheless, was not altogether hopeless. He retired to the country North of Gwálpára, collected an army, and endeavored to recover his kingdom, and in 1821 was successful in several skirmishes with the Burmese. Meanwhile Purrundhur Singh and the Burra Gohain were pressing them from the Bhután and Bijni side, and the Burmese Commander, in his turn, addressed the Governor General to solicit that no assistance might be rendered to the Raja, and that he and all others taking refuge in British territories should be surrendered. This application, however, as might be expected, met with no attention. But in 1822 the Burmese obtained very large reinforcements from Amarapúra, commanded by a Mingee of high rank, and with these forces they

completely routed the Raja's rabble, drove him to seek refuge as a fugitive in British territories, and now, elated with success, sent threatening messages to the British Officer commanding at Gwálpára, stating that they had an army of 18,000 fighting men, commanded by forty Rajas, and that they were determined to follow the Raja Chunder Kant wherever he went and take him by force, and that if the British chose to harbour him they must take the consequences.

Hostile attitude of the British checks the ardour of the Burmese, who turn their arms towards Cachar.

36. Troops were instantly moved up from Dacca to Gwálpára, and this caused the Burmese to pause before putting their threat into execution. Checked on this side, they turned their arms in the direction of Cáchár, where certain Manipúri Rajas, whom the Burmese had expelled from their lawful possessions, had obtained a footing, and the Officers of which State seemed to be in no better position than those of Assam. Since 1817 the ancient and legitimate Raja of Cáchár had made repeated and urgent applications to the English for protection against the Burmese and their feudatories, the Manipúris, which the Indian Government had refused to entertain; nor was it till the year 1823, when the Raja, alarmed at the designs of the Burmese on his territories, of his own free will offered to cede the sovereignty of Cáchár to the British, that the Government could be induced to give serious attention to the state of affairs on our North-East Frontier.

The Burmese threaten the frontiers of Bengal; declaration of war with the Court of Ava.

37. In the meantime intimation was received that the Burmese were planning the conquest of Cáchár, and that the Raja of Jamtiya had been called on to acknowledge allegiance to the King of Ava, and to repair to the Burmese camp, which was followed by the announcement that the entire force of the Burmese, both from Assam and Manipúr, had advanced close to the frontier of Sylhet. Here they were met by the British troops, and a declaration of war with the Court of Ava was the result. It is unnecessary to follow the course of subsequent events in detail. Suffice it to say, that after an arduous campaign of three months, in which the Burmese, with the display of little military skill but with some obstinacy, disputed the advance of our troops in strongly stockaded positions, the Officer commanding succeeded in establishing himself at Kuliabar, having freed the country in his rear, or one-half of the Province. But the rains setting in he was obliged to retire to Gowhatty to procure supplies, thus abandoning to the enemy all the country which had been wrested from

them, and this they devastated, carrying their incursions as far as Jamtiya; nor was it till the close of the cold season of 1824-25 that the Province was effectually cleared of the enemy.

The Burmese retire from Assam, committing fearful excesses, and carrying off 30,000 people into slavery.

38. In the interval, and in their retreat, the Burmese committed extreme excesses. Not content with ravaging and pillaging the surrounding country, and exacting heavy contributions from the people; nay, not content with mercilessly massacreing the weak and helpless Assamese in great numbers, they mutilated their dead bodies, seizing and driving before them into slavery (according to nominal returns made to Mr. Scott, the Governor-General's Agent) not less than 30,000 able-bodied laborers, or all they could lay their ruthless hands upon, *leaving the country behind them little better than a waste, and the remnant of the population they had spared, in a state of helpless prostration.*

Treaty of peace with the King of Ava.

39. On the conclusion of the Burmese war a treaty was entered into with the King of Ava (24th February 1827,) by which the Burmese Government engaged to abstain from all interference with the affairs of Assam. They have kept their engagement.

Interference of the Paramount Power in the affairs of Native States sometimes necessary.

40. I fear that I owe some apology for this tedious digression. I did not enter upon it, however, without a purpose. I desired to shew that, though interference in the internal affairs of independent Native States is a thing to be especially avoided, there may be occasions where to shrink from the responsiblity which self-preservation, the first law of States as well as of individuals, forces on the Paramount Power in India, may not only involve us in enormous expense and incalculable trouble, but cause us to incur the odium, if not the criminality, of being indirectly instrumental in the devastation of rich and flourishing provinces, and the impoverishment and ruin, the suffering and misery, nay, even the slavery and death of their inhabitants. During the anarchy and misrule which followed the withdrawal of the British force from Assam in 1794, partly through the vain struggles of the Assamese to free themselves from the oppression of their Burmese allies, and partly through famines, the result of this state of things, the district of Luckimpore was almost wholly depopulated, and other districts suffered more or less severely from the same cause. "The small remnant of the population," to use the words of General Jenkins, "had been so harassed and oppressed by the long civil and internal wars that had followed

the accession of Raja Gourináth Sing in 1780 down to 1826, that they had almost given up cultivation, and lived on jungle roots and plants, and famine and pestilence carried off thousands that had escaped the sword and captivity. All men of rank, the heads of the great Ahom and priestly families, had retired to one district, Gwálpára, having with little exception lost the whole of their property. With the nobility and gentry retired a vast body of the lower classes; the former mostly returned to Assam after our occupation, but large numbers of the latter never returned, and their descendants form still a large part of the population of the Hubbraghat and Koontaghat." I further desired to trace to their origin, the true causes of many of the unsatisfactory circumstances of the present state of Assam, the general scantiness of the population, its extremely unequal distribution, and the enormous extent of rich and productive land which lies waste and uncultivated.

Occupation by the British, beyond giving peace, did not, at first, materially improve the condition of things.

41. Nor did our occupation, beyond giving immediate peace to the Province and rest to the people, materially improve the condition of things. The Government remained long undecided whether it would retain or relinquish the Province, and but two Executive Officers were appointed to administer its affairs, one in Upper and the other in Lower Assam, the jurisdiction of each extending over a territory almost as large as Scotland. They could not of course perform the duty with any approach to efficiency, and were compelled to leave the reorganization of the Government to chance and to the natives themselves. The consequence was, the entire absence of system and its natural result—extreme mismanagement. It followed then that for some years the affairs of the Province drifted backwards; and, unfortunately, the first measures of reform that were adopted, though intended, and no doubt honestly intended, for the regeneration of the people, and though some of them may probably be considered unavoidable under British rule, were not calculated, in my humble judgment, unless carried out very gradually and with great caution, to confer any immediate benefit on a Province in the condition of Assam, but rather to retard its progress.

First measures of reform unhappy in their results, viz., reduction of the whole population to the dead level of the ryot; decay and destruction of the bridges, roads, and bunds; and the increase of malarious jungles and deadly swamps.

42. These measures were the collection of the revenue entirely in cash; the sequestration of Paiks, or unpaid laborers, and the emancipation of slaves; and the abandonment of the right of Government to exact personal servitude in lieu of revenue in favor of the principle of perfectly free labor. The *first* must have pressed heavily on the

already impoverished cultivators; the *second*, by depriving them of the means of cultivating their estates and confiscating their principal, and in some cases their only property, at once reduced every man of rank to the dead level of the ryot; and the *third*, in consequence of the millions of acres of rich and culturable land which lay around, affording to each laborer, at his own door, the easiest and most coveted means of obtaining a livelihood, necessitated the roads, bunds, bridges, tanks, and other noble public works erected under the native rulers falling into decay, and prevented the execution of new ones. Thus it was that the spread of population was checked, the breadth of cultivation was narrowed, and the waters of the mighty Brahmaputra and its many tributaries were left free to dominate, uncontrolled, over the plains, causing with their overflow, destruction to the crops of the already poverty-stricken ryots, and with their ebb, the steady diminution of the people by death from the malarious fevers and other diseases generated thereby. This is not the place to enter upon a discussion of the principles of taxation, nor upon the moral sin involved in the countenance of slavery by a civilized Government even for a day; still less would it be proper for me to animadvert upon the propriety or otherwise of the fiscal measures adopted on our first occupation of the Province of Assam. My business is rather with the results of those measures as they affect the existing state of things, than with the measures themselves, regarding the soundness of the *principles* of which there will probably be no question. But, though the effect of the *first* measure was transitory and has long since passed away, it is impossible for any one, of the smallest powers of perception, to pass through the valley of Assam to-day, without being forcibly struck by the total absence, not to speak of the higher, but of the middle classes of the people, and of the still more lamentable want of roads and bridges, and of the numerous vast and dismal swamps which everywhere meet the eye, and the noxious exhalations from which assault the senses and penetrate into the very system. And if I speak feelingly on this subject, it is that these latter are indelibly impressed upon my memory, for though I visited Assam at the most favorable season of the year, I lost half my precious and very limited leave from delays and difficulties in moving about, and I nearly lost my life from jungle fever. Yet the climate is cool, the soil is rich, the scenery is beautiful, and there are, taking it all in all, few countries in the World more favored by nature than this same valley of Assam; a little attention, a Government suitable to the people, and the expenditure of some money, alone being wanting to make it one of the healthiest, pleasantest, and most paying Provinces in all India.

Imperfect organisation of administrative reforms through the drifting process.

43. But if at first sight Assam seems to have suffered from neglect, it is when we come to examine the means that have been taken to make this rich Province productive, that we find most cause for reflection. There appear never to have been any efficient measures adopted to establish the revenue system on a sound basis. It remained long much as we found it, nor was it till 1832 that any attempt whatever seems to have been made to improve matters. Upper Assam, with the exception of Muttok and Suddiya, was then farmed out to a Native Raja for an annual payment of Rupees 50,000, (it was resumed again in 1839), and nine European Officers were appointed to the Province, which was sub-divided into districts. But these Officers were furnished with no definite instructions, and were so overwhelmned with work, that each acted independently, and as he best could, which gave rise to some differences of system, which were never corrected, and which yet remain unaltered. For twenty years the affairs of this noble Province were allowed to drift. In 1853 Mr. Moffat Mills was deputed to Assam, and he furnished a comprehensive report, suggesting the measures which seemed to him "calculated to improve the fiscal, civil and criminal administration of the country, to extend cultivation, and to develope generally the resources of this fine Province." This report, with the copious appendices which are attached to it, contains almost everything that is known of Assam, and many valuable suggestions are made in it, the most important of which, *viz.*, those regarding the revenue settlement, were never acted upon, the whole report being treated, I believe, as a dead letter. Alterations have been made at times in certain details, but generally the revenue system of the Province is not very different now from what it was a quarter of a century ago.

Existing Revenue system—method of making settlements detrimental to the revenue, and unjust to the ryots.

44. The Province is divided into six districts,* each of which is in charge of a Deputy Commissioner. One of these districts, Gwálpára, is permanently settled like Bengal. In the remaining five districts Government is the landlord, the Deputy Commissioner leasing out the land to the cultivator on its behalf on the true oriental system, or, annually, to the great body of holders; but to a few larger holders sometimes for three, four, five or more years. Thus of ninety-four settlements made by a Deputy Commissioner in 1852, sixty-nine were for one year, twenty-one for three years, one for four years, two for five years, and one for ten years. We may

* Gwalpara.	Nowgong.
Kamrup.	Sibsagur.
Durrung.	Luckimpur.

probably assume, then, that three-fourths of the settlements in Assam are made annually with each individual ryot *and for one year*,—a fact which is noteworthy; but not more so, perhaps, than the manner in which these settlements are made. As a rule, they are all made by the Collector, sitting in his cutcherry at the station, on the report of the *Mouzadár*, or native fiscal Officer. If objection is taken to his report, or if concealment is suspected, the Collector is expected to proceed to the spot and satisfy himself on the point in dispute; but he has unfortunately other more pressing matters to attend to, and consequently no time for this important duty, so an *Amin* of the Civil Court is sent in his stead. But the attempt on the part of a great Government to deal directly, and through its principal Officers, with tenants holding from a quarter of an acre to two or three acres, must always be abortive, and so it is in Assam: the *Mouzadár* usually has it all his own way, no objections are raised, and the *lease* is signed and sealed by the Deputy Commissioner, and delivered to the ryot. The *Mouzadár's* surveys, it is said, are liable to be tested by the old measurement papers and district maps, which, however, in the absence of a regular survey, are of course not to be much depended on. It will at once be obvious that such a system must leave room for great abuses, indeed cannot be called a settlement at all, and though in the neighbourhood of old established and populous places, ryots often hold the same leases without alteration for several years, when it is considered that, as frequently alluded to above, a large portion of the plains of Assam is subject to inundation, and that the habit of ryots throwing up their holdings from this cause is most common; and again, when we observe the infinitesimal sub-division of land amongst heirs (for land in Assam now is practically a hereditament) and reflect that the continued and perpetual clearing of fresh wastes must long be the rule, it seems surprising that some simplification of this arrangement should not have been arrived at before now.

The rates of assessment; proposal to alter them.

45. But it must not be supposed that these remarks apply to revenue assessments; they are simply measurement or boundary settlements. The rate of assessment throughout the Province is fixed. In Assam Proper there are two rates, 6 annas a beegah (Rs. 1-2 an acre) for rupit or low rice and homestead lands, and 4 annas a beegah (12 annas an acre) for high lands. In Gwálpára, there are three rates, homestead 12 annas a beegah, and the other two kinds of land 7 annas 6 pie and 4 annas 6 pie (Rs. 1-6-6 and 13 annas 6 pie an acre). The crops grown on

these lands are, on the low and higher priced lands, rice,—and on the high and lower priced lands, tea, sugar, tobacco, cotton, fibres, mustard, betal, pán, and the dry rice crop. Several questions have frequently been mooted as to the propriety of the existing rates of assessment; whether the number of the rates should be increased according to the different qualities of the lands and the crops grown upon them; whether the rates should not be equalized; or whether generally the rates should not be raised. Some think it anomalous that a third less should be charged for low rice lands, than for high lands on which are grown crops averaging three times the value of the crop raised from the low lands. Some think that rice being the great staple of the Province, the land on which it is grown should always pay the highest rate. Some think that all propositions to raise the land *rent* in Assam, for it cannot be termed anything else, are suggested simply with the view of driving labor into the Tea Gardens of the European Planters, and consequently ought to be resisted on principle.

Are the existing rates too low, and is the mode of making settlements calculated to increase cultivation and improve the cultivator?

46. But none of these arguments seem very forcible. That the rates will bear to be equalized, that is, that the high lands could pay the low land rates, without the infliction of any very great amount of hardship on the ryots is not a matter of doubt. Very considerable profits have been made out of cotton, and continued and lasting profits are now being made out of other dry crops, especially mustard, the breadth of land under cultivation with which particularly attracted my attention. But the real questions are, is the land assessment in Assam generally too low, and is the present mode of making settlements calculated to increase the cultivation or to stimulate the energy and enterprise of the cultivator? In considering these questions simply from a land revenue stand-point, looking to the *immense* wastes, and the comparatively infinitesimal amount of cultivation in Assam, a proposition to raise the assessment on cultivated land, notwithstanding the Government monopoly, might furnish grounds for considerable discussion. But viewed in connection with the general question of the taxation of the Province, the case is otherwise. And first, however disagreeable it may be to entertain the idea, we must broadly recognize the fact, that in a country where much land is waste, human beings are the thing primarily necessary to give it a price, and considering them simply as live-stock, the most valuable property a man can possibly be possessed of. If then the emancipation of slaves, and the

abolition of the Paik or forced labor system, without any compensation whatever to the owners of this kind of property, annihilated the aristocracy and reduced them in common with all intermediate grades of the community to the dead level of the ryot, there can be no doubt whatever that these measures have enormously benefitted this latter class.

Injudicious attempts at imposing novel taxes, and their consequences.

47. It has been shewn roughly that under the rule of the Rajas the taxation, whether levied in kind or in money, was about 3 Rupees a head per annum on each adult, or if estimated in personal servitude, even at its then money value about twice that amount; and taking the population at 1,750,000 souls, and the cultivated area of land at 967,268 acres, it will be apparent that on the average each adult does not cultivate much more than half an acre of land. This calculation is rough, but I venture to think that it will be accepted by any one who has visited the Province and become acquainted with the minute holdings into which the cultivation is sub-divided. The present revenue from land, then, is not more than a third of the taxation of the country, direct and indirect under the Assam Rajas, and the land revenue, which is not properly a tax but simply rent, is the only collection of any amount that is made in the whole Province. Something is raised from stamps, fisheries and ferries; but until tea planting became the fashion, these duties were, and still are, trifling. The revenue raised from the sale of Government opium is altogether peculiar and abnormal, and will be treated of below. A tax was levied upon arts, trades and professions, regarding the policy of which it is only necessary to observe that, at the time of its imposition, there *was* not, and up to the present day, speaking generally, there *is* not an artisan in the valley; that looking to the great natural wealth of the Province, its trade is *nil;* and excepting the wretched hangers-on of the Civil Courts, professions are positively unknown. An attempt again was made to impose a tax on pán and tobacco, but the people rose in opposition to it, and assembling *en masse* at Nowgong, attacked and beat a European Civil Officer to death with clubs, and it was ignominiously abandoned. The income tax was then imposed, but with even worse success than any of the others, for it resulted in a wide spread rebellion in Jaintiya, which necessitated expensive military operations and a harrassing campaign to suppress it. But one of the prominent features of an income tax, as at present applied, is that its incidence shall be felt by the upper and middle classes of the community only, and both classes having become almost

extinct in Assam, the determination to impose it could have originated, as did other injudicious and abortive attempts to improve the revenues, in ignorance of the circumstances of the Country.

Improved condition of the people; dearness of food.

48. That the condition of the people, nevertheless, within the last quarter of a century has, as I have said, immensely improved, is unquestionable. General Jenkins ten years ago said, "The Assamese are now, I may safely affirm, I believe, as well off in all respects as any ryots in India; the trade of the country has very greatly increased, and though its management has been most unprofitable to its own population, yet through it the Assamese are now daily commanding an increase of foreign luxuries, and they have an abundance of all the necessaries of life. With a little increase of industry they could no doubt place themselves in a still higher position of comfort, but with the abundance of rich and productive lands at their disposal, and long established habits of being satisfied with the produce of their own fields, it will take no inconsiderable period of time to overcome their usual apathy." And a ride through the country will satisfy any one of the truth of these remarks. Formerly the household utensils and cooking-pots of the masses were of earthenware; their clothes, when they wore any, were of a coarse kind of cloth of native manufacture; and their ornaments were, for the most part, of glass or shells. Now, brass and iron vessels are extensively used, a very large proportion of the laboring classes, especially in Upper Assam, where tea planting is of oldest standing, wear silks and Manchester goods, and amber and gold and silver ornaments, and even precious stones are beginning to form part of the women's wardrobes. Extensive herds of cattle, miserably small unfortunately from want of breeding, and lean from want of good pasture, with flocks of goats or pigs, fat geese, ducks and fowls are to be seen round every village. In some parts of the Province, principally in the neighbourhood of stations and tea plantations, the price of rice has doubled, and in some quadrupled, within the last twelve or fourteen years. Many tea planters are actually importing it from Bengal. The price of a very wretched fowl, when I was at Tezpore, was 8 annas, or double the price at which the same quality of animal could be purchased in Calcutta; and so independent are the villagers that even at these prices it is only by compulsion they can be induced to sell them. Contrary to the rule in most parts of India as in other countries, in Assam, money will not purchase money's worth. The necessary wants

of the people are so few that they can procure them all without it, and as for luxuries,—always excepting that baneful drug, to encourage the consumption of which cannot be viewed otherwise than as a grievous sin, if not a heinous crime,—in their present uneducated condition, they are far too indolent, and far too lazy, to exert themselves to procure them.

Present circumstances favorable to an increase in the land rent.

49. Independent altogether of the undoubted right of a Government to participate in the increased prosperity of its subjects, such a condition of a people it appears, to me, indicates a state of things in which some additional taxation would in all probability have a beneficial effect, and since the *whole* population are cultivators, and land at present almost their sole necessity, as the present assessment is extremely low, whether we look to breadth and evenness of incidence, facility of collection or the willingness of the people to pay it, the propriety of increasing this assessment, or in other words, of raising the rents, in preference to the imposition of taxes against which the people will certainly kick, would seem to be obvious.

Enforcement of the right of the Government to share in increased value of produce not at variance with sound policy.

50. As to the *right* of the Government to share in the increased value of the produce of land not permanently settled, there can be no question; but there is a tendency on the part of many persons of the highest authority to dispute the *policy* of enforcing that right which leads me to think this view will not be universally approved. The form the argument usually takes is that the wealth of a Government consists in the wealth of its people; that the idea of its having a separate and distinct interest of its own is purely oriental and barbarous; that a Government which abandons its right to participate in the increase in the value of the land in favor of its people loses nothing, but, on the contrary, gains everything; that those who entertain this opinion, are the upholders of an enlightened policy and the advocates of progress, while those who maintain the contrary, are the upholders of orientalism, which means stagnation.

More of fallacy than of truth in the foregoing argument. The truth.

51. It would take far too much time and space to examine closely these arguments; but as this question in India may be said to be the question of the day, I hope I shall be excused for saying a very few words on the subject. It appears to my humble judgment that if there is *something* of truth in this position, there is very much more

of fallacy. To prove broadly the truth, reference may be made, and generally is made, to the experience afforded by England and other countries in which the Government does not look to the land tax as a material source of revenue, and, at first sight, the reference carries with it conviction. But are the circumstances quite similar? Certainly not. No Government of England, having a large and easily collected land revenue, has ever, that I am aware of, deliberately sat down to discuss the propriety of giving it up. The Government of England's present position in relation to the soil is the growth of centuries, and the result of circumstances it cannot, at any period, be said to have controlled, while the strength and ability of her people to bear taxation consists, not in the abandonment of the land tax by her Government, but in the extraordinary profits derived from the trade and commerce carried on by that portion of her enterprizing population who have not had the good fortune to inherit or to become possessed of land.

The fallacy.

52. To demonstrate the fallacy of the argument is easy, and I really do not recollect any illustration more apposite than that contained in the well-known line of Dryden's—

"My wound is *great*, because it is so *small*,"

which was so admirably criticised by the Duke of Buckingham, who extemporaneously completed the couplet as follows—

"Then 'twould be *greater* were it *not at all*."

If the advantages of abandoning to the landholders the Government's, or in other words, the State's share of the increase in the value of the produce of the soil, be so numerous and great, why not abandon the *whole*. The reasons it appears to me why such should not be done are various; but I shall only give one. It belongs to the people or the Community. The Government is simply Trustee, and has no more right to permit A, without B's consent, to retain or to become possessed of funds which should be expended by it for B's benefit, and then to tax B to make up the deficit, than any other trustee would under similar circumstances. If, then, it is not the landholders who are the wealth and strength of England, but the merchants, the manufacturers, the tradesmen, the artizans, the navies, and such like, it will follow that not the argument above given, but the converse of it, will be true, and *policy* reconciled with *right*.

Necessity for a new system of land assessment.

53. But should an increase to the land rent be approved in Assam, it will be desirable, I should think, that such increase be made as part of an entire new land revenue system, a system

which will be somewhat more suitable to a country in which two-thirds of the culturable land is waste, than that at present in vogue. To provide that if an unfortunate ryot, with the expenditure of much extra labor, clears and cultivates a few square yards of jungle land which may have lain waste for centuries, it shall with unerring certainty be measured by a fiscal officer at the close of the year, and be assessed at the same rate as land which may have been cultivated for an indefinite period, seems to me as suicidal as it is unjust. The greatest strength of the revenues of America has been the unlimited fund she possesses in her immense extent of waste land, but her Government has surely been wiser in the use it has made of this inherent power of the State, than to abuse it in this wise. And this brings me to the consideration of the working of the Rules passed within the last few years for the disposal of waste land.

The sale of land in fee simple, at present, objectionable.

54. I some few years since published my objections to the sale of land outright in the present circumstances of Assam. The principle of these is that the mainstay of the revenues of India is the revenue derived from land, and if nine-tenths of the land in Assam be freed from all demand for revenue for ever, in consideration of a present paymemt of five shillings an acre, or double or quadruple that sum, as the principles of taxation eventually cannot be different in Assam from those adopted in other parts of India, the deficiency in the revenue will necessitate its always being kept in a comparatively backward condition, which would be unfair to this Province, or else involve its becoming a drag on the imperial resources, which would be equally unfair to other possibly less prosperous Provinces of India. Were the population of Assam, or of India, composed of Europeans, there would be no objection whatever to the sale outright of the land. On the contrary, the land might, in some circumstances, be given away with advantage to the State if purchasers could not readily be found; but as they are Asiatics who have been accustomed from time immemorial, and in accordance with their laws, to consider a sixth share of the produce the property of the King, to which, though not to other things, he has a prescriptive right, unless a complete change in the religions, laws, character and social systems of the peoples of India be anticipated, the case is quite different. Accepting things as they are, it is a notorious fact that the present Rules do not give satisfaction to any class, while the results of their application, I cannot doubt, will lead to serious inconvenience and loss both to Government and individuals, and endless litigation.

Objections to the existing Land Sale Rules from the Planter's point of view.

55. The objections to the existing Rules from the planter's point of view, as I have become acquainted with them, are—

1st.—The uncertainty of obtaining the fruits of his labor.

1*st.*—That a man may have spent much time, labor and money, perhaps may have risked his life, penetrating into jungly places, infested by malaria and wild beasts, in search of a piece of land suitable for his purposes, and that another who has sat quietly in the station, or it may be a thousand miles off, and taken no trouble nor spent any money in the matter, may buy it over his head on the day of sale.

2nd.—The difficulty of ascertaining the requirements of the law as to demarcation.

2*nd.*—Objection is taken to the impossibility of an applicant ascertaining what description of the land will satisfy the different Collectors. Each seems to have his own peculiar ideas on the point, so that unless an applicant takes up land on a revenue paying pottah, a planting season, or perhaps two, may be lost before he can commence his operations, and when it is considered that very heavy contracts for tea-seed and coolies have to be entered into before the land is obtained, and that the planting season lasts but four months, this is a very serious difficulty. It arises no doubt from over-caution, and a desire to guard against the very careless manner in which boundaries were given and the recklessness with which lands were sold on the first introduction of the Rules. Men then applying for a few hundred acres positively gave boundaries including an area of some thousands of square miles, and the lots were advertised, put up and knocked down to the applicants. True, the rules fixed 3,000 acres as the maximum of one grant, but until survey the boundaries could not be adjusted. Now the other extreme is often the rule. A Collector returns numerous applications over and over again, stating that the boundaries, in his opinion, are too vague. He is then asked to point out what is wanting, to which he replies that the application will be forwarded as soon as the requirements of the law are complied with, which however he is very careful not to point out. The Commissioner is then appealed to. Now it was a ruling of the Commissioner that nothing short of a map drawn to a scale of one inch to a mile, which only professional Surveyors could of course comply with, should be considered sufficient; nevertheless, he generally solicits the orders of the Board of Revenue on doubtful points, who refer the application to His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor for decision, who gives it as his opinion that boundaries should be sufficiently definite to secure the ready identification of

the land. Nothing can be more strictly correct, but unfortunately it leaves every Collector free to exercise to the full extent the peculiarities of his own caprice, and the planter exactly where he was before. Hence it follows that the boundaries that are considered good in one district are bad in another, as a reference to any one of the *Calcutta Gazettes* for the past twelve months will shew.

3rd.—The delay in surveying the grants.

3rd. The failure on the part of Government to survey the grants of land sold, though it is made a condition of the sale that the fees for such survey shall be paid by the planter before the day of sale, and while on all balances of purchase money due to Government a charge of 10 per cent. per annum is made, the survey fees are retained, and neither is the land surveyed, nor any interest paid on the deposit.

4th.—The delay in granting titles.

4th. Objection is taken to the extreme delay, in some instances extending to several years, that takes place after the lands have been sold, before any kind of title-deeds can be obtained.

Objections to the existing Land Sale Rules from a Government point of view.

56. These are grave objections, yet from a Government point of view it appears to me that the objections to the new Rules are somewhat more serious still.

1st.—The check thus given to the reclamation of wastes.

1st.—The primary object of Government in passing these Rules, no doubt, was, by granting a coveted title, on very easy terms, to ensure the immense wastes of Assam being cultivated as speedily as possible; but I fear they have not attained this end. On the contrary, they have unwillingly prevented its accomplishment. A few men who happened to be on the spot, or had agents there, seized upon the opportunity to possess themselves of all the best sites in the Province, and purchased large tracts of land with the avowed intention, not of cultivating them, for they had not a tithe of the necessary capital, but of *keeping them out of cultivation*, or in other words, of keeping them out of the possession of men who would cultivate them. The result is that much land, especially in the Síbságur District, which, if available in blocks of moderate area, would be cultivated immediately, is still kept waste and will remain so for many years, or until the price of tea land rises to such a point as will render it remunerative to present holders to put their lots on the market. Under the excitement of the first sales so high a price was paid for some blocks, as renders

it very doubtful if the speculation will turn out a good one to individuals, but by far the largest portion of the lands have been sold at the upset price of Rs. 2-8, or very little more. I mention in the margin a few of the largest holders of land,* and the following figures give the total result:—

Land taken up under old Rules	187,531	acres.
Ditto revenue paying pottah	77,516	„
Granted in spirit of Lord Canning's Rules	9,564	„
Purchased in fee-simple	271,714	„
Total ...	546,325	„
Land cultivated	45,894	„
Difference	500,431	„
Waste still in the possession of Govt., about	6,000,000	„
Difference to be taken up and cultivated	5,199,569	„

Notwithstanding that there is a good deal of waste land taken up in the tea districts, the above figures will show that it is comparatively but a small portion of the whole, and some millions of acres of good land yet remain; but it is, for the most part, in isolated places, difficult of access, and without any population, and as the increasing cost of importing labor, and the imposts which, wisely or unwisely, continue to be placed on the importation of labor, must, to a great extent, tend to dim the prospects that before appeared so bright of reclaiming this Province, and of individuals making rapid fortunes in tea, it will probably be many years before Europeans will be induced to go there. Chittagong has lately been opened up as a tea growing district, and promises well, and other districts will doubtless yet be added to the number of those which are already known to be favorable for the growth of tea; but, excluding the newly acquired Duárs in Assam Proper, not much favorably situated land remains to be taken up. This of course enhances the value of those properties already formed, as it creates to a certain extent a monopoly; but it puts Government very far indeed from the object it had in view.

2nd.—The encroachments on lands available for ordinary cultivation.

2nd.—Another point for consideration, arising out of the objection just raised is, that should land revenue regulations more favorable to the spread of cultivation in Assam be passed, unless the owners of these grants should see their advantage in cultivating them with crops other than

* Omitted in original.

tea, or in renting them, I fear this monopoly will tend to check the extension of ordinary cultivation. One of the boundaries of a grant, if possible, is always the cultivation of the ryots, as it is naturally the object of the planter to get as near to the village labor as he can; and perhaps the most singular part of the arrangements for the disposal of waste lands is, that while a *wealthy* planter under the old Rules could take a lease of 100,000 acres of land for 99 years, paying nothing at all for all the land cleared and cultivated for 15 years, and under the new Rules he can now purchase any quantity of land out-and-out, for Rs. 2-8 per acre, every patch of waste land reclaimed and cultivated by a *poor* ryot, as before mentioned, is measured by the fiscal officer at the end of the year, and he is compelled to pay Rs. 1-2 an acre per annum, perhaps before he has obtained a single crop from it. The framers of the Rules possibly may have thought that the waste lands in Assam consisted of rocky or stony hills, swamps, or barren sandy plains, requiring the expenditure of large sums of capital to reclaim them; or belts of jungle or primeval forest, separated by a clear line of demarcation from the readily culturable land; but it is not so. With the exception of Kámrúp, the high banks of the Kullung River, and a very few places where the roads, overgrown as they are with giant jungle, are distinguishable from the waste, the *whole* of Assam is a vast jungle of dense forest and grass, out of which here crops up a knot of villages, with their clumps of bamboo and betel trees and surrounding patches of cultivation, there a tea plantation, and elsewhere, though few and very far between, a Government Civil Station. There is not what could be called a town in the whole Province. The cultivation, then, and the jungle are portions of one and the same expanse. What is cultivation to-day, may be, and often is, jungle to-morrow, and, though not often, *vice versâ*. The natives, too, are beginning to find out the position of things, and many of them, especially the Court officials, are going in for tracts of lands at Rupees 2-8 an acre in the neighbourhood of villages, with a view of leasing them out to the ryots. This was certainly not contemplated by Government. Nor is it now probably understood that the present system, if not arrested, will create a variety of tenures, in the heart of the Province, which eventually may prove extremely inconvenient.

3rd.—Endless litigation.

3rd.—Again the endless litigation that is almost certain to arise when the existing grants come to be surveyed will, I fear, completely swamp the Courts of the country, and put an end to all other business.

It was proposed by many to survey the whole Province before selling the land, and it is a pity, I think, that this course was not adopted. The expense and delay, I believe, were considered too great, but I question if the loss, the inconvenience, the delays, the correspondence and confusion that will be the inevitable consequence of not having done so, will not more than counterbalance the expense and delay, however great, this course would have necessitated.* But supposing that the expense of creating a fresh survey establishment for the Tea District, had been greater than the present income of the Government of India would warrant, I am not aware that the immediate survey of other lands in Bengal, which are not being sold in fee simple, is invested with the pressing importance which attaches to the survey of the Tea Districts; and if not, would it not be wise to transfer the survey parties now carrying on operations in those parts, to Assam and Cáchár, and stop all sales till the survey is completed? Complaints on the non-issue of titles are now very loud and ought to be attended to, especially as Government with the planter is equally an interested party. One gentleman, a member of a mercantile firm in Calcutta, tells me that since 1861 he has been trying to obtain titles but cannot. Another gentleman of my acquaintance left his valuable estates in Scotland last year, and proceeded to Assam in the same steamer with myself, for the express purpose of visiting his estate and of procuring titles for certain grants he obtained about four years ago; but after spending eight or nine months running between his tea plantation and the station, and prowling, day after day, in and about the Deputy Commissioner's Court in quest of these title deeds, I am given to understand that, disappointed in his errand, he is on his way down to Calcutta, and will have to return to Scotland without them. Another gentleman was so long trying to get pottahs for two grants of land in the Nowgong District, that during the interval another planter applied for a grant giving boundaries inside his, and the Collector sold him, for Rupees 2,500, nearly the whole of the first applicant's land, to whom the purchaser shortly after offered it for Rupees 25,000. I could mention numerous other cases more or less alike; but it is unnecessary. In each doubtless the Collector has his excuse; but the main cause of the difficulties in obtaining land when applied for, and of getting pottahs when possession is given, is the want of a proper survey of the Province. Even now it would prevent further confusion to stop all sales of land until it is accomplished,

* It is proper to observe that much difference of opinion has existed on the points here discussed between the Board of Revenue and the Government of Bengal; but the objections of the former have almost invariably been overruled.

or the question of the sale of waste lands re-considered *ab initio*, and I think it would be by far the best course to adopt.

Indication of the dissatisfaction of Government with present Rules.

57. But I need not pursue the enquiry further; a few months ago the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal sanctioned Rules which involve a return to the old system of leasing out lands, though in a modified form, in Cáchár, and it has been discussed whether they should not be extended to Assam. The principle involved in this change is at variance with that of the new Rules, and its adoption seems to indicate, without the necessity for any further demonstration, that the latter have given as little satisfaction to Government as to the planter.

The question of labor antipodal to the question of land.

58. But equally, or perhaps more important both to Government and to the planter with the question of *land* in Assam is the question of *labor*. The conditions in which we find both questions are antipodal. On the one hand we have a superabundance of rich land lying waste, and on the other we have no labor to till it. We have an urgent necessity for roads, bridges, bunds, and other public works to make the Province accessible and habitable, but we have no people to construct them, and we have abundant and melancholy proof that the want of these land-marks of civilization is gradually depressing the Province, and causing a yearly diminution in the already scant population, while it is an active agent in decimating the new population that is being imported at such enormous cost by the planters, and is the chief cause why emigrants object to go to this rich land of promise.

The subject under the ancient regime the property of the King as the representative of the State; peculiar and interesting organization of the community.

59. The great principle of the ancient *régime* in Assam, was that the subject was the *property* of the State. The King allowed him a portion of land for the support of himself and family, but he was entitled, as a right, to the labor of each adult, not a slave or the servant of a temple. The whole population was divided into sections of about 1,000 to 5,000 each, called *Khails*, over which were set officers called *Búrúhs*, *Sikiáhs*, and *Hazárís*. These Khails were again sub-divided, the last sub-division being into parties of three, called *Gotes*, each member being designated a *Paik*. Of these three, one Paik worked for the King, the other two of the same *Gote* being compelled to till his land, while he was so employed. The King thus had always in his service some hundreds of thousands of able-

bodied men, and it was through this means that those noble public works were executed which have since been allowed to fall into decay.

The effects of the sudden transfer of the property of the Crown in the subject, to the subject himself.

60. But the *Khailwari* system was, unfortunately perhaps, somewhat hastily abolished in 1832. Now, I do not mean to imply that the abolition of this system was wrong, but simply that it would probably have been better had it not taken place until some other had been approved, that would have compensated the Government for the enormous loss it must have sustained, in the transfer of the property of the Crown in the subject, to the subjects themselves ; and which would have saved this fine Province from relapsing into a primitive state of jungle. No such measure of reform, however, has been introduced up to the present day, nor, though some have written on the subject, as far as I have been able to ascertain, has any one clearly explained the peculiar relation which existed between the sovereign and the subject in Assam—a relation so different from anything our governing classes have hitherto been accustomed to,—or the singularly important bearing any change in it must have had upon the progress and prosperity of the Province. On the contrary, the emancipation of the slaves, and the removal of all restrictions from the power of absolute control over his labor by the subject, has usually been upheld as an immeasurable blessing, and, as a general principle, I should be very unwilling to dispute the position. At the same time, blessings under wise regulations may be the contrary without them, and so I fear it has been in Assam. A principal reason why cultivation is not extended in Assam is that there are no roads to carry the produce in excess of what the country people require for home consumption, to places where there are really good markets, and the natural consequence is, that people do not produce. Many of the tea planters at Díbrúghur, almost the extreme end of the Province, and other places, are actually importing rice from Bengal, while millions of acres of rice lands remain uncultivated at their doors, and *no man* raises a crop very much larger than the necessities of his household compel him to do.

Want of appreciation by the Assamese of the benefits conferred on them, their hostile bearing towards their benefactors.

61. It may be urged that, at least, by freeing the people from oppressive and tyrannical conquerors, and bestowing on them perfect freedom, we have earned their gratitude, and it is true we *have* earned it; but unfortunately they do not appear to see it. The bearing of the Assamese towards the race who has conferred on them these

inestimable benefits, not excepting Government officials, may be called independence by some; but accustomed as I have been to see Englishmen in other parts of India, as long as they conducted themselves like gentlemen, treated with respect and consideration, and Government functionaries with the utmost deference, by Natives, I regret much to observe that *downright hostility* appears to me the only suitable terms by which to define the rule of their conduct in Assam. This may partly have arisen from the inability of peoples, long accustomed to a severe despotism, to distinguish between liberty and license, and partly from an erroneous impression prevailing very generally in Calcutta and with a *few* officials in the Province, that it is their special mission to interpose between the planter and the ryot in order to protect the latter from ill usage. But though my attention was especially directed to this matter, I altogether failed anywhere to discover that such interposition was in the smallest degree necessary, while *everywhere* I had the strongest proofs that the feeling I allude to is as general as it is mischievous, and that, in effect, it recoils on the Government with far more force than upon individuals, planters or others.

Want of influence of the Civil Authorities in the Province.

62. From the Commissioner to the Junior Assistant in Assam there is not an official that has any personal influence in the Province, a state of things that, in a country the people of which are in the primitive condition of the Assamese, seems almost incomprehensible, and which, as everything that has ever been done for the moral or social improvement of the people of India has been brought about by personal influence, cannot but act as a bar to all progress. This statement possibly may be denied, and I beg to state that in making it, I do not wish to attribute *blame* to any one; but, short though my tour was in Assam, the evidences of the fact were too abundant and striking to leave the smallest doubt upon my mind of its positive truth. Lest, however, I should be misunderstood, and as calculated more clearly to define the position, and the better to explain my own meaning, I will illustrate it by the following comparison.

Illustration from the Punjab.

63. When, as a private person, I visited my estates in the Kangra Valley of the Punjab,—a Province, be it remembered, not peopled by a weak and enervated population whom we had just relieved from the oppression of a tyrannical despotism and emancipated from slavery; but a Province peopled by a stalwart race, whose prowess in the field has been extolled since the days of

Alexander the Great by all who have met them, and who did not acknowledge our supremacy until they had twice caused our power to tremble in the balance,—a few lines to the Deputy Commissioner of the Jullunder District insured me the utmost attention along the whole line of my route. Wherever I stopped, either the Native Fiscal or Magisterial Officer was in attendance, to see that I prosecuted my journey with ease and that all my wants were supplied, his sole anxiety being that I should mention favorably his attentions to his superior, the District Civil Officer. The first morning after I reached my property, the *Teshildar*, or Native Collector, waited upon me, accompanied by all the Zemindars and headmen of the neighbouring villages who had spontaneously come to welcome me to the valley, and to pay their respects, bringing with them presents of fowls, eggs, milk, fruits, vegetables, and samples of tea manufactured by natives; and arrangements were made by themselves for regularly supplying me with what I required during my stay in the valley. There was no cringing; the people were in the enjoyment of the most perfect freedom. They were, moreover, strongly opposed to Europeans settling amongst them, but the Government had given proofs that it desired to encourage the cultivation of tea, and their opposition was not, in a hostile spirit, persisted in; the land tenure was established on a reasonable and equitable basis; I and my co-proprietors had, in a very short time, spent upwards of £12,000, and other tea planters, according to the scale of their operations, more or less, among the people; the price of land, labor, and all kinds of produce had gone up; the condition of every grade in the social scale was improving; they were not slow to see it, and the result was such harmony and good feeling among all classes, that Sir Robert Montgomery on his late tour through the valley was able to express himself in the following happy terms:—"During my stay in this locality, I took measures for ascertaining the position and wants of the planters, and the feelings of the Native population towards them, with a view of rendering such assistance in the development of this important branch of commerce as the Government can legitimately afford. Nothing can be more satisfactory than the relations between the planters and the Native inhabitants of the valley. Though my camp remained here for several days, I heard not a word of complaint; on the contrary, the villagers seem fully sensible of the benefits resulting from the presence of English capitalists; for, as one of them remarked, 'cultivators, who, a few years ago, had hardly clothes to cover them, now count their rupees by hundreds.'

"They have further applied for the establishment of two schools for teaching the English language, half the cost of which they agree to defray themselves."

Illustration from Assam.

64. When, in the same capacity, I visited my estates in Assam, though the proprietor of thousands of acres of land, and employing as many of the people as were not too indolent to work, and spending amongst them *monthly* a sum of money equal to the whole *annual* collections of the Mouzah; though I made my entry with two elephants and such other outward and visible signs of wealth and barbaric splendour as were calculated to indicate that I was a person of *some* consequence; though I scattered handfuls of rupees amongst the drunken reapers whose fields I passed over;* though the villagers, *en masse*, had full permission to cut wood and to graze their cattle *gratis* in my forests; and though some of them had been allowed to cultivate my lands without paying any rent whatever, not one of the headmen of the villages came to pay his respects, or to welcome me; villagers positively refused, not to give, but to sell me a cup of milk; and it was with considerable difficulty I procured such means of subsistence as rice, milk, eggs and fowls for the few days I remained on my estate.

Accidental proofs of hostility of the people and want of influence on the part of the Civil Authorities.

65. Planters have told me that often, when they had occasion to travel through the country, though goats, fowls and ducks were numerous in the villages, they were obliged to depend mainly on their guns for their dinners, and Government officials fare little better. Unless an actual police order be issued, an official in Assam could hardly procure a coolie to carry his personal baggage, and even when the whole weight of the whole civil Government of the Province is brought to bear, as was the case last year during the Bhútán War, having regard simply to the carriage of baggage and the supply of the commonest necessaries of life, it seems powerless to compass the convoy of a Brigade of Troops, in the lightest marching order, through any part of the valley, or the hill districts which skirt and surround it. When proceeding from Nowgong to Tezpore, a distance of 16 or 18 miles, it was not without some hesitation that I was furnished by the Magistrate with two coolies to carry my bed and portmanteau, and though I wrote the day before to the

* It was harvest time (the *Chota* or Little *Bchu*) when the Assamese are drunk with opium and the Cáchárís with strong drink for a month; these saturnalia occur twice in the year and utterly destroy all reliance on local labor.

Magistrate of Tezpúr to advise him of the time I would cross the Brahmaputra, and he issued the necessary orders, and very kindly had an elephant waiting for me at the Tezpúr side of the river, there were no boatmen at the Nowgong side, and it was consequently only by employing my own servants, and a Native who offered to work his passage, that I succeeded in getting ferried across the river, after having been twelve hours in making a journey of 18 miles on the Government high road between the two chief civil stations of Central Assam! A short time before, a European lady was actually refused any assistance by the Magistrate, but being anxious to catch the steamer to Calcutta, she determined on braving the heat of the burning sun and the dangers of the wild beasts, which nowhere in all Assam are more numerous than in the jungles which border on this road. With this resolve she set out to walk, and actually did walk the whole distance on foot, for though the Civil Doctor started after her with a pony, she had arrived at Tezpúr before any help reached her. Again, I was travelling from Tezpúr to Gola Ghât: the driver of the elephant, though under the orders of the Magistrate, left me lying quite prostrate with fever on the banks of the river, and made off into the jungle, returning only under threats from a friendly planter, backed up by the persuasive influence of a double-barrelled gun levelled at his head. But the strongest instance, perhaps, of the presence of ill-feeling on the part of the people, and the absence of that personal influence on the part of the Civil Authorities which, it is well-known, in many parts of India is more powerful for good than a regiment of soldiers, is evidenced by the following occurrence which took place when I was in Assam.—The Deputy Commissoner of Luckimpúr being anxious to accompany Mr. Medlicott, the Geological Surveyor, into some difficult and jungly places in the neighbourhood of the Nágá Hills, sent his wife back to the station, which was, I believe, 20 miles off, in a dooly. About half way the bearers left her in a village and refused to go further, nor would any of the people, Native officials or others, give her any assistance in procuring other bearers to prosecute her journey, so that she had to proceed a distance of 10 miles into Dibrúghur, with her little child, on foot. Such a *contretemps* would have been an impossibility in the Punjab, or perhaps in any other part of the whole of British India, yet the Deputy Commissioner of Luckimpúr, an officer as popular as he is reported to be efficient, would not admit to me that he had little or no influence in his district. He allowed, however, that if he

exercised the smallest extra-judicial or magisterial authority, the probabilities were that a complaint would be sent to the Commissoner at Gowhatty, which seemed to me to be the best proof of the truth of what I alleged.

Assam an inhospitable region—not yet completely in our possession.

66. Such instances in the experience of a private person may be of trivial import, but they prove that, to the stranger, the Valley of Assam is an inhospitable region; and for the movement of troops it must be, I should think, far worse than an enemy's country. And the reason for much, if not all, of what I have noticed here, is, that Assam is governed as if it was an integral part of Bengal Proper; while, in the opinion of some who ought to be well informed, we are not yet in complete military possession of the Province, and hold our civil stations simply as so many encampments.

Effect of the existing state of things on the labor market.

67. But there is a view of the question more intimately connected with this portion of the subject than the movement of troops or the convenience of travellers—the effect of the existing state of things on the local labor market, as regards the strain now put upon it for the advancement of tea cultivation and public works. Time was, not very long ago, when all the labor required for tea planting was easily procured in the Province at about Rs. 2-8 to Rs. 3 per man per mensem. It subsequently gradually rose with the demand to Rs. 3-8, then to Rs. 4, then to Rs. 5, and now Rs. 6 and even Rs. 7 per mensem will not procure the number required for the purposes of Government and the tea planters. If you ask the reason why, you will be told that there are now ten tea plantations where there was formerly *one*, and most people are satisfied with this explanation; but it lies only on the surface, and embraces by no means the whole of the question.

System of advances enables local laborers to defraud their employer.

68. Formerly tea planters gave advances to the villagers at the season when they had to pay their rents, when they were dunned by a usurious money-lender, or were otherwise pressed, and in due course laborers came to the factory and worked their advances off. In these matters they were an honest people. At the proper season the factory jemadar went round to each man under an advance and accosted him, saying "friend, thou art wanted," and forthwith he went.

He never thought of refusing. He had been paid his day's hire; he would do his day's work. Now, these once honest villagers are by no means so simple. They take advances, averaging frequently as high as Rs. 8 to Rs. 10, from the factories all round, and work at none. At Samagúri, a factory of the Upper Assam Tea Company in the Nowgong District, when I visited the place, no less than 3,000 laborers were under advances, but about 150 only could be got to work. At another factory, in the same district, there were 300 men's names on the books, out of whom I found nine present, though there were £250 out in advances for work. Now, if an overseer from a factory goes his rounds, instead of responding to his call, the villagers repudiate their debts, and if he threatens, they laugh at him; or, should he be rash enough to use compulsion, if near a Court, a charge of assault and battery immediately follows.

The Courts of Justice inefficient as a means of redress; fine times for the local laborers.

69. The Courts are certainly equally open to the planter, but he can only sue for the recovery of his money, which he does not want. He cannot, if he would, prosecute hundreds of men. The delays and difficulties, moreover, of obtaining a judgment, even in a single case, are such that, in the Nowgong District at least, the Court, as regards such cases, is wholly inoperative. What the planter wants is not his money, but the labor which he has paid for, and which the laborer has, at a time when its price may have saved him from jail, contracted to give. The planter's time is too valuable to admit of two or three days being wasted in the prosecution of a dishonest cooly, so he saves it and loses his money instead. The villager, on the other hand, is master of the situation, and he knows it. He works nowhere, but sits down at his ease in his village, and eats his rice and smokes his opium purchased with the money of which existing circumstances enable him to defraud the planter with perfect impunity; lies down to sleep, to arise, eat and smoke, and sleep again. There is hardly a factory in Assam, and especially in the Nowgong District, in which there are not large irrecoverable advances outstanding, and the sums of money which planters have thus lost are in the aggregate very considerable. And unfortunately the new contract law does not apply to local laborers who will still remain, what they term themselves, *man khushi* coolies, or laborers who do as they please. That the population of Assam is in many parts scant, is notoriously true, but, as before mentioned, it is not the paucity of men, nor the multiplication of tea plantations, which is the sole cause of

the inefficiency of the local markets to supply the number of laborers required. If the population, as stated, be about 1,750,000 souls, and the whole number of laborers, both local and imported, (as given in the last report of the Commissioner of Assam) employed by tea planters, amount to 37,564 men, women and children,* or twice that number, tea planting being the sole branch of industry requiring any large amount of labor in the Province, it would not seem that this proportion should cause any great strain on the market. Nor would it, in my opinion, have done so had things been differently managed; had the indolent and lazy habits of the people, as in Ceylon, not been fostered by nominal rents; and had this industry, which is admittedly of national importance, been protected and encouraged by affording some aid to the planter in obtaining a fair day's labor for a fair day's wages.

* Imported	...	11,957
Local ...	...	25,607
		37,564

These numbers are manifestly incorrect.

70. The present system, as regards local labor, appears to me radically wrong. It indirectly encourages fraud, and by directly pressing up the price of labor to a height that, if not impossible for tea planters to pay, must inevitably, most materially, restrict the cultivation of tea; and for this the planters are quite as much responsible as any one else. But, as far as my humble judgemnt will enable me to form an opinion, the question is not rightly understood in Calcutta. From the moment the pressure for labor to carry on tea cultivation in Assam and Cáchár forced itself on the attention of the Government, "high wages" seems to have been the one idea which was constantly pictured out in all official reports on the subject. "This state of things," wrote Sir John Peter Grant in January 1860, "indicates the propriety of high wages," and as the price of labor has gradually risen from Rs. 2-8 to that point at which it now stands, the authorities have looked on approvingly, in the impression doubtless that they were benefitting the *poor* ryot at the expense of the *rich* planter, and although the present rates are about twice as high as those ruling in Lower Bengal and the North-West Provinces off the line of rail, yet some of the Civil Authorities in Assam are not satisfied, nor will they be satisfied, I am told, until they see wages up as high as Rs. 12 a month; a rate which, in their opinion, tea planters can well afford to pay. Now, if it is a benefit to eat more opium and do less work than ever he did before, the ryot in Assam has certainly been largely

The propriety of high wages the ruling idea in Bengal.

benefitted by the high wages he has received: but it is equally true that this benefit has been obtained at the expense of tea planting interests. It is now positively *cheaper* to obtain labor from Bengal, at an import charge of £10 a head for men and women, and half that for boys and girls, than to employ local laborers. All the small capitalists who would have lived on their plantations have consequently been driven out of the field; Natives cannot cultivate the plant at all, and the operations of the larger capitalists have not only been immensely contracted, but the gardens, even of the most influential companies, not excepting the Assam Company itself, have been worked with short hands, and have proportionately suffered.

View of the question from the Government stand-point.

71. This is the view of the question from the planter's stand-point. Let us look at it now from the Government point of view.

Competition between Government and private persons unfair to the latter.

72. When high wages, as the natural result of fair competition in the *open* market between labor and capital, indicates a high state of prosperity, there can be no doubt whatever that they are a subject for unalloyed congratulation. Should the extraordinary profits of any trade or business invite such severe competition that a greater demand for labor occurs than the existing supply will meet, and complications arise, they are gradually adjusted as it were by a compensating balance, and things soon settle down. In such case, any interference with the natural course of circumstances is mischievous, because, in the end, it must prove detrimental to all parties concerned, and the point for enquiry is, is such the state of things in Assam? I do not think so. The market is certainly *open*, but there is a feature in the case which renders the terms of the competition unfair; a feature which I venture to think remained altogether out of sight in the consideration given to this question. Where Government public works, as in England, are executed by contract, the equilibrium of prices is very rarely disturbed for any length of time; but when *employés* enter the market, not spending their own money, nor the money of their immediate employers, but backed by the whole capital of a powerful Government, the competition is no longer equal; for, on the one hand, capital is limited and its expenditure regulated by *certain* rules; and, on the other, it is comparatively unlimited, and its expenditure is regulated generally by *uncertain* rules; in India, frequently, by no rules at all. When a struggle takes place, the weaker, of course, goes to the wall; but it will not follow that the stronger, or, in this case, the

Government, though victorious, has always reason to congratulate itself on the result.

Such competition, as necessitating a very heavy drain on the imperial revenues, not beneficial to Government, and, as restricting public works, injurious to the country.

73. In pressing up the price of labor in Assam, I cannot help thinking that it has been altogether overlooked, that if the demand for laborers for tea cultivation is great, the demand for laborers for Government purposes is ten-fold greater, or, in other words, that for every *one* man wanted by tea planters, Government will want at least *ten;* and that the influx of Europeans and imported laborers into the valley renders this demand, on sanitary grounds, and for the purposes of military defence, if not for the improvement of the Province, most urgent and pressing. Now, from the little attention paid to the land settlement and general taxation, the revenues of Assam, I very much fear, are less able to afford an equal, much less a double expenditure on public works, than other parts of Bengal. Indeed, I may safely say, that it is patent that they are not in a position to bear comparatively an expenditure equal to half the amount, while it is equally patent that the wants of the Province are four, if not five, times greater. "High wages" then in Assam, from a Government point of view, means simply, on the one hand, fewer roads, fewer bridges, fewer bunds, and other absolutely necessary public works, or else a very heavy drain on the finances at the disposal of the Government of India for imperial purposes, and, on the other, no increase in the revenues of the Province, and a continued high rate of mortality among the Native troops, the police, and imported coolies. Finally, it is worthy of consideration that if tea planting, which requires a larger amount of labor than any known cultivation, is so lucrative as to be able to bear a rate of monthly wages equal to Rupees 12 per man a month, and still yield a large *profit*, the works upon which Government is employed, if compared with similar works executed in other parts of India, will most certainly not bear this rate without yielding a very considerable *loss*.

Effects upon the Army and Police.

74. Again, I would venture to suggest whether it is supposed that when Assamese coolies working in tea plantations and employed in making roads, bunds and bridges, and as camp followers, are paid Rupees 12 a month, the soldiers of Native Regiments serving in Assam and Cáchár, and the Police of these Provinces, will receive their monthly wages of Rupees 6 and 7, and still be content; or if not, whether measures for finding the "ways

and means" have already been considered. Nor is it a moment too soon to take into consideration the very serious complications that may arise from the difficulty I allude to. At the time I am writing, orders have been issued to recruit 500 coolies for the Survey Department in Cáchár at Rupees 8 a month, or one Rupee more than is paid to a Native soldier. If they cannot be induced to take service with Government for less, this is all right; but hundreds of coolies are weekly found willing to proceed to the same place under three years' contracts to work for tea planters at Rupees 5 a month, which certainly appears strange. There cannot be two market rates, and it would seem, therefore, that either Government is obliged to pay too much or the planter pays too little; or that the service of the much abused planter is preferred to that of Government. Within the last week I had an offer to supply me with 1,000 coolies a month at the lower rate, and as under the existing law there can be no doubt that emigrants, as a rule, understand their contracts, I must assume, that they undertake them willingly. It would not be reasonable, however, to suppose that the laborers on plantations will long remain satisfied when they find their fellow-laborers in Government employ getting nearly double their pay; and unless, as stated, their treatment in the latter is worse, and their work much harder, I anticipate a rich harvest of discontent to be followed by many desertions among planters' imported laborers, which will be set down probably to ill usage.

Philanthropy good only when tempered by a prudent economy.

75. Philanthropy is undoubtedly a very good and commendable thing, but experience teaches us that with the business agents of a Government, as with the business agents of persons engaged in commerce, trade, or any other of the transactions of the world, philanthropy, unless tempered by a prudent economy in the management of affairs, does not, in reality, tend ultimately to the welfare, and that highest state of prosperity of peoples which ought to be the natural ambition of all. If Rs. 8, or Rs. 10, or Rs. 12 is the rate of wages ascertained to be proper by fair competition in the open market, by all means let the laborer, from the sweat of whose brow all wealth comes, derive the fullest advantage of the increase in the value of their labor; all I wish to indicate is, that where a Government competes with private capitalists for it, some caution is necessary to avoid a violation of the grandest principle of the English system of economy, the increase of a nation's wealth by the encouragement of *private* industry and enterprise.

Strange feature in the competition for labor in Assam; one-half or two-thirds of the wages of all local laborers goes to Government.

76. There is a feature in the inquiry, moreover, which though it goes to prove that the encouragement given to high wages will not prove so hurtful to Government as I have supposed, and which, though from this point of view it has an ugly appearance, yet brings out in such bold relief the extreme unequalness of the competition I have alluded to, that in fairly stating the case as between Government and the planter, it is but just and proper to point out, lest being peculiar to Assam it might be lost sight of. I allude to the fact that whatever the wages of local labor, while the planter has to pay it in full, the Government, through its Opium Department, as will be shewn lower down, receives a drawback of one-half, or probably, in many instances, two-thirds, of, not simply the wages to its own laborers, but of all the wages paid by all the planters in the Province to their laborers. The revenue obtained from the sale proceeds of this pernicious drug can hardly be received by philanthropists, or any other class of persons, with satisfaction, while the retention in the hands of Government of the monopoly of retailing it, and the comparatively unlimited powers of expenditure possessed by Government servants, render it quite possible for it, as a competitor for labor, to ruin all other competitors for its own benefit. These circumstances, it is obvious, must place the case altogether outside those limits within which a close adherence to the rules of economic science will help us to a right conclusion; and although these remarks apply only to local laborers, yet it is obvious that the wages paid to laborers, at their own doors, must always affect the question of imported laborers, which I shall now more immediately consider.

Imported laborers.

77. It would occupy too much time to go further than I have already done into the necessity for the importation of foreign laborers into Assam, or its causes; or yet to enter very deeply into the general principles of immigration. As regards the first, it will be sufficient to say that so extremely risky, and in some instances, so ruinous, have been the consequences of the present unsatisfactory condition of the local labor markets, that planters are willing to pay any price short of prohibitory rates for imported laborers, rather than bear them. As regards the second, I would observe that if Government thinks it is desirable for people to emigrate from the more populous districts of India, where they are often starving, to places where they can never want, while taking proper precautions to afford the immigrants reasonable protection from

fraud, extortion, deception, and the other evils inherent in all systems of recruiting, on the part of the recruiter or employer, and the employer from the like evils on the part of the emigrant, it is sound policy to make it as easy as possible both for people to migrate, and for those who require their labor to import them.

Existing law sufficient to protect the emigrants; its evasion; cost of an imported laborer.

78. In regard to the law as it now stands, it seems sufficient to protect the emigrants, if it is acted up to by those whose business it is to carry it out. The sad mortality attending the early attempts of the planters to import coolies into Assam as they would import sheep, resulted solely from the inattention of Government to the treatment they experienced at the hands of the contractors in the depôts at Calcutta, and from want of proper sanitary arrangements on board the boats or steamers on the upward passage; but these evils have been to a great extent rectified. The contractors, however, still require much looking after in the interior. Coolie catching, as recruiting is termed by the Europeans employed in the business, is a paying trade. The price of a coolie for Assam in the Calcutta market at present is about £5. In addition to this amount the Steam Companies charge £2-5 for passage, and as these charges are alike on all women and boys over 10 years of age, and half rates on children under 10 years, allowing for deaths, each adult laborer is not placed on the plantation much, if at all, under £15. Except the 8 or 10 shillings expended on his necessaries,* none of this unfortunately goes to the coolie himself, and it follows that a large profit remains to the contractor. In proportion to this profit will be his exertions to procure coolies in numbers, and if he cannot do so according to law, unless the contractor for coolies and the recruiter be men of high moral character, which, as a rule, it would probably be unsafe to calculate upon, they will try and do so contrary to the law. The point on which the law is most frequently evaded is in taking the coolie before the Magistrate of the District in which he is recruited, and the reasons are obvious. No other Magistrate can obtain the information regarding him required by law, and no Magistrate of a neighbouring District is likely to take the same interest as the Magistrate of the coolie's own District in ascertaining that he has not been imposed upon. Nor will anything short of the strictest attention on the part of Magistrates, and the enforcement of severe penalties on recruiters, put a stop to this evil. The authority given to Magistrates to release the coolies

* 2 linen dhoties of four yards each.
1 jacket, not to be under seven lbs cloth.
1 white calico Cap.
1 flannel banian.
2 Patna blankets.
1 tin plate.
1 tin drinking cup.

is of little use. Were he to act upon it the coolies themselves would be the first to object. Far from their homes, and without any means of supporting themselves, even for a single day, they would at once be pounced upon by some other recruiter, who finding them on the spot, though against the law, would recruit them, and the Magistrate, unless prepared to pay their way back to their homes, could make no objection to his doing so.

Abuses not greater than are inherent in all systems of recruiting.

79. There can be little doubt that though ample checks are imposed by the law, some misrepresentation is still used to induce men to engage for the Tea Districts, and that a few people are enticed away by highly coloured statements, if not by false promises. Indeed, as far as I am aware, licensed recruiters and contractors are the prime abuse of the system. But as long as the district authorities and the Protector of Emigrants in Calcutta exercise ordinary vigilance, and the penalties authorized by law are strictly enforced, it does not appear to me that *under the present system*, on the part of Government, anything more can be done further than to facilitate, as much as possible, *planters hiring their own laborers;* nor, as long as Government is satisfied that the laborers on tea plantations are well paid, well housed, and well treated in other respects, does more interference with laborers appear to be necessary. If some coolies are so simple as to be readily imposed upon, others again are *budmashes* (evil-doers,) the scum of the bazars, who frequently make the misrepresentation of recruiters an excuse for breaking their contracts, and sometimes incite a whole gang of coolies to decline to go to the plantation for which they were recruited, to refuse to work when there, or to desert from the service of their employer altogether. Misrepresentation is no doubt the trump card of the catcher of coolies; but after all, to be fair to the contractor, I must state that many of them have been ruined by the dishonesty of their recruiters;* and the recruiter may urge in his defence that if misrepresentation is *his* trump card, it is not more so perhaps than it is the trump card of the catcher of recruits for Her Majesty's Army; with this difference in favor of the coolie, that his catcher is sharply looked after by the authorities, and that while, let us say, an equally large proportion of coolies as of Army recruits accept service, because they find it to their advantage to do so,

* "Now I beg to state that I am bound to supply the expenses and the wages of the coolies; please send me here a draft for another 1,000 Rupees at hand;" (extract from a recruiter's letter.)

"I am quite surprised that the Mohurir has spent 500 or 600 Rupees only for thirty-two coolies. I saw him buy a horse and a gun, and he goes every where in palkee," (extract from another, shewing how the money goes.)

or because they find it difficult to obtain the means of existence at their own homes, the remainder are well protected, and are not seduced by the glare of a brilliant uniform, and a head-dress decorated with many parti-coloured ribbons, into taking the shilling while under the influence of intoxicating liquors.

Stringency of transport regulations; improved condition of the coolies on tea gardens.

80. The law now *in intention* provides in every way for the health and comfort of the coolie during the time of his transport to the Tea Districts. Indeed planters complain bitterly that two feet more space on board registered boats is insisted upon for coolies than is allowed for soldiers, which of course materially affects the cost of the transportation. But I will first consider his position while at the gardens, and the means adopted for the protection of both planter and laborer while in the Province. It is supposed by many that coolies on tea plantations are treated little better than slaves, and that tea planters are very hard task-masters indeed. No doubt there are some exceptions to every rule, and the tea planter is not more immaculate than other people; but I confess that during my tour through Assam, I neither heard nor saw anything to warrant the belief that they were more cruel or more brutal than any other class of Englishmen. On the contrary, everything seemed to indicate that the coolies were not only well treated by their masters but that the planters were fully alive to the necessity, for their own interests and protection, of taking the utmost pains to look after and care for their imported coolies. Formerly, imported coolies were allowed to hut themselves like the Assamese, miserably, and, as the phrase goes, "to die off like rotten sheep." Now, wherever I went, I found that imported coolies, as a rule, were treated with care and attention. I found excellent lines and hospital accommodation at the plantations of all the large companies, and private planters were fast following the same course. Indeed so well-off generally are the imported laborers that, getting their rice for one Rupee a maund, for which the planter has to pay perhaps Rupees 3-8,* they can afford to eat fish, kids, ducks, and other luxuries which they never could have dreamt of at their homes. I have been informed that coolies often pay more for these things than the European planters themselves are willing to pay; and this is intelligible when it is considered that an able-bodied man finds no difficulty in doing a double *haziree*, or task, in the day, and that whatever be the market rate, the planter must give him his rice at 1 Rupee for 80 lbs, and when

* For the last eight or nine months the price has ranged between Rupees 3-8 and Rupees 8-8; and in Cáchár as even as high as Rupees 7 and 8 per maund, (6th September 1866.)

we know that an Assamese laborer spends half his wages in opium. In Assam, however, the inducements to save are few, and I have frequently seen laborers returning to their lines after completing their day's task at 10½ or 11 o'clock, preferring to spend the remainder of the day in smoking and sleeping to earning an extra wage.

Strong position of the coolie.

81. In coming down from Assam I visited some plantations on which were located coolies who had come up in the steamer with me, and I could not have recognized them. In two months' time, from miserably poor, half-starved-looking wretches, they had become fat, sleek, and able-bodied laborers, clearly indicating that the last condition of these coolies was better than the first. The lazy are, I assume, made to work; but in all other respects, as far as I could judge, the coolie seemed to be quite master of the position. "In the Indigo Districts," said a manager to me, "I used to knock my coolies about as I liked, if they did not do their work, or did anything wrong, and neither coolie *nor any one else* thought anything the worse of me, but here if I only *look* bamboos at a coolie, it is a criminal offence;" and I think this statement accurately represents the comparatively strong position of the coolie, imported or local, in Assam, over his relative in the Indigo Districts of Bengal. Under the circumstances, and considering how entirely dependent the planter is on his labor, I cannot understand how any systematic oppression could be long carried on. Indeed, I am satisfied that all planters in the Province are far too much alive to the great difficulty of obtaining labor of any kind, and the extraordinary expense of importing foreign labor, to ill-treat their coolies, excepting, as I before said, a small proportion. A percentage of persons of uncontrollable temper, or of a hard-hearted and cruel nature, will be found among all classes of Britons, as well as among people of other nationalities, and I do not suppose that the tea planters of Assam and Cáchár are exceptions to this general rule; but whether it is that the circumstances above alluded to operate as a wholesome restraint, or from any other cause, that percentage in Assam seems to be very small.

Opinions of the Civil Authorities regarding the treatment of their laborers by planters.

82. And I do not think I can be mistaken on this point, because knowing that a contrary opinion prevailed very generally in Calcutta, and that this opinion had for some years retarded the passing of any measure for the relief of the planter, I made most searching enquiries on the subject; and as every encouragement as well as every facility is afforded to the coolies to complain, and no testimony ought,

therefore, to be more convincing in this matter than that of the Magistrates, I record it precisely as it was given to me.

Opinion of the Commissioner, Colonel Hopkinson.

"The laborer is generally kindly and humanely treated by the planter: individual cases of severity being used may occur occasionally, but they are exceptions, and not the rule. In regard to imported laborers they are always ready to abscond; in most cases not from any real grievances they might have, but from a wish to get free of their liabilities, and to pocket all their earnings instead of being under monthly deductions for advances received. Deception on enlistment may in some few cases be used, but it is hardly credible that with the vigilant supervision which might be expected from the highly paid officials of the Transport Department at Calcutta, there can be many instances of the kind."

Opinion of Deputy Commissioner Major Comber.

"It is very unusual to receive complaints of ill-treatment; the planters are too much alive to their own interests in Luckimpúr to ill-use their coolies. The disputes that arise between planters and laborers are all connected with contracts, and I think, as the law at present stands, the coolie has the best of it; the planter never fails in the payment of wages, while it is common for the coolie (especially the local) to take advances without the remotest intention of performing his work. There may be cases where attempts have been made to screw more out of the coolie than is right, but on the whole, I am satisfied that the planter performs his part of the contract much more honestly than the laborer does his. From my observations in visiting tea gardens, and I have seen them all, I may say the coolies are well treated, well paid, arrangements made for their food where gardens are remote, by the establishment of rice godowns, &c., &c.; medicines are supplied in all the good factories and in nearly all the small ones. I speak only of my experience of this District. I have heard of ill-treatment by planters elsewhere, in Cáchár, for instance, but the planters here, as a rule, carefully attend to the comfort of their laborers. Local laborers again, as I have said above, seem to look on it as a part of their education, to take advances without any intention of performing work. Their nature is to be deceitful, and they can no more help it than an Englishman can help his predilection for racing, prize-fighting, or other games of that sort."

Opinion of Deputy Commissioner Captain Lamb.

"I have received no complaints against planters of ill-treatment, and I believe, as a general rule, the coolies are well treated. I am rather inclined to attribute the running away of

coolies to their own desire to defraud as many planters as they can obtain advances from, than any ill-treatment they receive. I don't know what check there is to changes being effected after coolies have been passed ; but unless healthy men are substituted by worn-out old men, and men who appear quite unfitted for such labor as may be reasonably expected by planters in return for the heavy expenses they have incurred, I cannot imagine how such men can have been passed as in a fit state of health to proceed to Assam, much less to give "a fair day's work for a fair day's pay" when there. I have heard of an instance of three *lunatics* having been sent up as coolies ! A contractor's responsibility ceases as soon as the men are passed, and thus the planter has no one to fall back on, when such bad bargains are made."

Opinion of Deputy Commissioner Captain Sconce.

"I have not many complaints of ill-treatment. Most of the complainants state that their contracts have been worked out, and apply to me to declare them free. These complaints are generally made by runaway coolies, who on being prosecuted for breach of contract either acknowledge their agreements, or they are proved to have broken them. Cases of violence and assault by planters against coolies very seldom come before me, and I fancy that the few well-known flagrant cases of this nature may have created a notion that planters, as a body, maltreat coolies. This I believe to be a mistake. Men who have everything to gain by conciliating and humouring their laborers are not likely to treat them badly. If this be true regarding local laborers, how much more true must it be when expensive imported coolies are concerned. It must be remembered that planters command all the laborers of the Province. This could not be if they systematically ill-treated coolies. And yet there are a great many cases of desertion. This I attribute to various causes, namely, deception on enlistment, the engagement of men unsuited to the work, dislike to the country, especially if the coolies happen to be employed on a new garden, the desire of obtaining further advances from other planters, and the encouragement given by unprincipled persons who cannot obtain laborers except by enticing away other planters' coolies. No doubt these are the chief causes of desertion. The records of the Criminal Court prove that desertion is not brought about by violent treatment."

Opinion of Officiating Deputy Commissioner Captain Campbell.

"Only one or two complaints of assault. I am of opinion that coolies are well treated on plantations."

No imported laborers in Kamrup or Gwalpara.

83. In Kámrúp the population is not so sparse as in other Districts, and plantations not being numerous, there are very few imported laborers. I did not therefore make particular enquiries on this subject there, but Captain Lamb, who had been Officiating Deputy Commissioner in Kámrúp for the last eighteen months, informed me that only one complaint was made to him in that interval, and that was not of ill-treatment, but was a complaint of certain laborers who refused to go to the factory they were recruited for. This was the result of misrepresentation, and, on the advice of the Magistrate, the coolies went to their work. Gwálpára being perpetually settled, and no title that Europeans will take being obtainable, though there is much good tea land, there is no tea planting except by natives, who have not done much.

Ill-treatment not the cause of desertion.

84. I should not be surprised, however, if it be asserted in the face of the opinions here expressed by those who ought certainly to be better informed than any one else, that coolies frequently desert from their employers, and that this could not be the case if they were well treated. But this is a very great mistake. That coolies run away is perfectly true; but they as frequently persistently refuse to go to the plantation for which they were recruited before they have ever seen their employers, and if ill-usage were the cause of their dissatisfaction in the first instance, it surely could not be so in the second. Again, while the runaways from tea plantations are exceptional, of the 800 coolies sent up by the Government of Bengal last year to make the road from Gowhatty to the Camp at Komari Khatta, one-fourth deserted within the first week after their arrival. Such a case of wholesale desertion is unheard of with the planters, yet, must we suppose that the Government Public Works Department maltreated their laborers. Fortunately, the difficulty can be solved without such an unpleasant alternative. The fact is, and often has been established, that in the generality of cases where coolies desert in bodies from a plantation, they are instigated to do so by some one or two bad characters, men who never intended to work, and who have determined and made up their minds from the commencement not to work. Again, it must be remembered that Assam is in a very primitive state, and many plantations are in wild and out-of-the-way places, surrounded by dense jungles, which are infested by tigers, bears, boa-constrictors, rhinoceros, elephants, and other wild beasts. There are no bazars, no shops; the planter sometimes has not

had the labor or the means of erecting any but very temporary shelter for his coolies; in short, often everything is as desolate as it well can be. This is to be expected in what is called a "new clearance" in an unpopulated and waste region, and though Sonthals, Dhangurs, and other wild races may be accustomed to these kinds of places, I am not at all surprised at Hindustanis, on arrival, becoming alarmed, and deserting on the first favorable opportunity, though, in a few weeks, having cleared away the jungles, erected their houses, and "settled down" to their work, the probability is that the little colony would be very comfortable and contented. Indeed people, I fear, in discussing what is commonly called the "coolie question," are apt to lose sight of the practical view of it, and to argue as if the sole object to be obtained is, or at least ought to be, to transport the laborer from a desert to a ready-made oasis, instead of quite the reverse.

Strong guarantees for the good treatment of the laborer by the planter. Sanitation the chief point requiring the attention of Government.

85. The really important consideration in regard to imported coolies, a consideration far more important from a Government point of view than his treatment, is the health of the coolie, and here, I doubt not, the planter will not only most heartily co-operate in, but most thankfully accept any measures calculated to improve the existing state of things. We have the strongest and the very best guarantee that the planter will treat his imported coolies well, *viz.*, their very great cost. No man in his sound senses will *maltreat* an expensive horse; why should he maltreat an expensive laborer who is under a contract to serve him for only three years, and whom his chief object is to induce to settle on his estate. There is no reason that I can think of, and though the rule will not as forcibly apply where a garden is managed by a paid assistant, it is very certain that the assistant who ill-treats his coolies, will soon have his garden a desert, and earn his dismissal. But unfortunately an equally good guarantee does not exist as regards the coolies' health; not that the planter is not equally solicitous on this point, and equally desirous of administering, to the best of his ability, to the medical wants and comforts of his coolies; but on the one hand he cannot control the climate, and on the other he has not the means. Medicines certainly he may have, but skilled medical advice he cannot have. The law requires that on every estate where there are 300 imported coolies, there shall be a diplomaed Surgeon. Now diplomaed Surgeons do not at present exist in sufficient numbers to supply the demands of Her Majesty's Army, much less the tea

plantations of Assam; and if they were as plentiful as they are scarce, they would not go there, except on salaries that very few planters could afford to pay. The great Assam Company, the market value of whose shares represents a capital of £600,000, has never had one, nor has any Company in Assam that I am aware of now got a diplomaed Doctor. Two there were, one at the Jorhât Company, and the other on a private plantation of Mr. Knowles, but both died this year. Some Companies and a few private planters have assistants who have acquired some knowledge of drugs, as Apothecaries, Hospital Apprentices, or Compounders, and many have Native Doctors, and this seems as much as they can do;* and as it is as much as Government itself does for detachments of Native Troops under the strength of a wing of a Regiment, and the coolies have never in their lives had any medical advice at all, it seems that it ought to suffice.

* Since this was written I have ascertained that Native Doctors cannot be obtained to supply half the plantations in Assam, and the demand will necessitate Government doubling the pay of all its Native Medical Establishment.

86. Again it is said that coolies ought not to be compelled to live in places that are unhealthy, and most certainly, if it were possible, it ought to be avoided; but the whole of Assam, speaking generally, is extremely unhealthy, for reasons beyond the planter's control, which have been already explained. In particular, all new clearances are and, in a Province like Assam, must be unhealthy, though after the place has been ventilated or opened out, the jungle got rid of, and a tea garden of two or three hundred acres fairly established, it ought not to be more unhealthy than other places in the Province. In the neighbourhood of many plantations, however, there are vast swamps or jheels which, when the rivers subside, and the overflow of the waters recede, are a prolific source of malaria and its consequent diseases; yet, strange to say, the high lands in the neighbourhood of some of these places are better adapted for tea than any others. It will be very long indeed before any part of Assam will be very healthy, and that time will be longer or shorter in direct proportion to the efficiency or inefficiency of the means adopted for controlling the rivers and increasing the present population. It is a rule that imported coolies are not employed at any plantations where a European Assistant is not located, and provided that the planter provides his laborers with good barracks, good clothing, good food, good hospital accommodation and medicines, and good Native medical advice, it appears to me that he will have done sufficient, on his part, towards their health and comfort.

Impossibility of locating imported laborers only in healthy places.

The more important measures of sanitary reform appertain to the business of Government, and is not that of the planter. Want of public Hospitals.

87. But the larger and far more important measures of sanitary reform in Assam properly appertain to, and can only be undertaken by, Government. These consist in a combined system of roads, bunds and drainage, which shall perform the double duty of restraining the overflow of the rivers, and affording those means for locomotion which do not at present exist. Looking to minor desiderata, I should be glad to see a public Hospital at the Head-Quarters of every District in Assam, to which planters could send all coolies with broken limbs, and chronic or other diseases requiring superior medical skill in their treatment. At present, with the exception of the Jail and Regimental Hospitals, there is not a Government Hospital throughout Assam, and as outside patients are not admitted to these, no Native in the country, unless a criminal, has the means of obtaining any medical treatment whatever; and I am credibly informed that an enormous proportion of the children of the Province are annually carried off by small-pox. I should further be glad to see established in connection with such Hospitals, Dispensaries or Medical Stores where out-patients could be attended to, and where planters could supply their plantations with the necessary medicines at reasonable rates. This latter is not perhaps so much the immediate business of Government, but if the object is to care for the health of the coolies, it is obviously more desirable to make it easy for all the planters to comply with the ordinances on the subject, if it can be done without great cost, than to compel each individual planter, big and little, to make his own arrangements. At present each planter must supply himself with large stores of medicines, the greater portion of which, in a climate like Assam, go bad in a short time, and are often not renewed, while some planters in out-of-the-way places, in consequence of the difficulty and expense attending the present means of procuring medicines from Calcutta, do not, I believe, have any at all. A supply of simple medicines, however, for every plantation is indispensable, for there can be no doubt that the sickness in the plains is very great. Dysentery and fevers are the very scourge of Assam. Statistics there are none, and it is not easy to give an opinion of value on the subject, but from all the enquiries I made, I should think the percentage of deaths from dysentery to be very high among the imported coolies. Arrangements have been made for obtaining returns of the sickness and mortality on plantations, and it certainly is so very desirable that such should be done that I trust it will not be lost sight of.

88. But as regards imported coolies, I am of opinion that more attention is required to the health of the coolie before he comes into the hands of the planter than afterwards.* The mortality on board the steamers, which take coolies to Assam and Cáchár, though the average may not be so great as it was before, is, as I shall shew below, very high. Nor do the Medical Officers seem to be able to give any satisfactory solution of the cause. It is attributed to many causes, bad or insufficient food, want of space amongst the coolies, wet decks, want of protection from cold winds, and to those sudden changes of temperature so remarkable in Assam; but though on a point of this nature I give an opinion with much diffidence, and one which I would on no account desire to place in opposition to the professional opinions on the subject, I am inclined to think that the coolies are over-fed and *over-clothed*, rather than the contrary. A good blanket, or let it be two, as the law requires—though one is quite enough in the summer and rains to sleep upon, and in the winter to sleep within—is a sensible adjunct to the health and comfort of the coolie; but flannel banians, linen or cotton shirts, dhoties, and other articles of clothing, are not only senseless but positively useless, if not mischievous, *impedimenta*. Hundreds of native boats containing thousands of natives may be seen sailing up and down the Ganges and Brahmaputra daily, but in none of them do we find the natives encumbered with these superfluous garments. The ordinary clothing of the Dhangurs, Jungleeo or Sonthals, and other classes who form the bulk of the transports to the Tea Districts, consists of little more than sufficient to cover their nakedness. They are quite unused to be encased in flannel banians and the like, and the consequence is that it is difficult to get them to keep them on. I went up to Assam in the month of December, and I visited each flat daily, and very often at night. It was "the order" that all the coolies should put on their flannel at night-fall, and this order was a source of perpetual strife between the Medical Officer and the coolies, the former insisting on the flannel banians being kept on, and the latter as determinedly tearing them off. This *undoubtedly* is a cause of sickness, and one that might very easily be remedied by allowing the coolies more closely to follow nature and the bent of their own inclinations. Again the rations, of late, have been increased from

More attention to the health of the coolie required before he comes into the hands of the planter than after; over-care a cause of sickness.

* From some cases of extreme mortality that have come to my knowledge since the above was written, I think it prudent to qualify the opinion here expressed.—(6th September 1866.)

10 to 12 chittacks of rice, and other things have been added, which the coolies, especially hill and jungle men, have never been accustomed to, and which the planters will not be able to get for them in the jungles of Assam.

The real requirements of the emigrant coolie.

89. It must be recollected that these coolies are going to a wild jungly country where they will have hard and very rough work, and to supply them with, what some may consider comforts, but which, to the ordinary coolie, must be luxuries, or indeed anything more than the commonest necessaries, is to do not only his employer, but the coolie himself, a positive injury. It will lead him to assume that these luxuries are part of a system to entrap and allure him to an odious service. It will render him discontented with his work, and unfit him for it, and, in some instances, I believe it will kill him outright. Pure air, and plenty of it; ordinary and well-cooked food, and not too much of it; as much work as circumstances will admit of; fair medical treatment; and above all, the strictest attention to cleanliness,—these are the grand requirements of health; give them to the coolies, and both laborer and planter will, I believe, be very thankful.

The new Contract Law.

90. Regarding the measures taken by the Council of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal to secure to the planter the labor he has paid for, commonly called the "Contract Law," there are many opinions, and some adverse; but, without entering on a discussion of the principle of the law, I will say that Government having actively stimulated and encouraged people to grow tea, having held out the strongest inducements to them to buy lands for the purpose, and having itself sold these lands to them and taken their money, it appears to me that it could not justly do less than give these people adequate protection and a sufficient guarantee that they shall enjoy the benefit of the labor they import at such great expense, for the period for which the laborer has contracted to serve, as long as they do not disregard the responsibilities of their position, nor abuse the powers that may be conceded to them; and that, as a rule, they do not do so, I think I have satisfactorily shown.

Impracticable nature of the law viewed in relation to the real circumstances of the planter; and the consequent uselessness of the Courts.

91. And here I would say a word regarding the position of the planter in Assam, which, from all that I have seen written on the subject, I am confident is not generally understood in Calcutta. The greater part of the laws, ordinances, rules and regula-

tions, on matters connected with tea planting, which have heretofore been in force, have been framed to suit a state of things which does not really exist. That is to say, that to render it possible to carry them out, tea plantations should be grouped round the Civil Courts ; else, where a number of plantations are in close proximity, a Civil Court should be placed in the midst of them. But what is the real state of the case ? With the exception of three plantations at Dibrúghur and two at Golaghât, I do not know of a single plantation in Assam that will meet the necessities of the case. As a rule, and in all legislation, be it remembered, we must legislate for the rule and not for the exception, plantations are 15, 20, 30, and even 50 and 60 miles from the *nearest* Magistrate. Plantations that are 10 or 15 miles from a station are considered quite neighbouring, yet even this distance, though nothing to a planter who has the rare good fortune to possess a couple of good horses to ride his 30 miles in a day, (*i. e.*, 15 there and 15 back) is an insurmountable difficulty when it has to be travelled on foot, in a country where no man can be out after night-fall, even in the immediate neighbourhood of stations, without danger of being carried away by tigers. For the *nearest* plantations, then, a single case in Court means for the plaintiff and the defendant, with perhaps a cloud of witnesses, one day to go, another to come, a third for the case, and two to be in attendance, or say five days in all. If the planter has not an Assistant, what is to become of his work ; and where are the defendants, witnesses, &c., to be housed, fed, and taken care of in this interval ? Again, as the planter's witnesses, in most instances, would be his headmen, who would look after his other coolies on his plantation ? They might all sit down and smoke, lie down and sleep ; or, if a very bad lot, seize on the opportunity to take to their scrapers and bolt altogether.

Reliance on the honesty and self-interest of the planter; a better guarantee for his conduct than Courts of Justice.

92. It is plain, then, that in legislating for tea planters and their laborers, all idea, under present circumstances, of attempting to make the Courts an efficient means of affording relief to either the one or the other in the mass must be abandoned; and that until Government is prepared, by a multiplication of Courts of Justice and good roads, or other easy means of approach to them, to make them available and useful, it is to the honesty, integrity, good sense and personal interest of the planters themselves it must look for effecting its object. And it appears to me that more is to be effected in that direction to which, to its honor, the intentions of the Government of India are plainly directed, by recognizing

the responsibility of a tea planter's position, and trusting him as long as he proves himself worthy of this confidence, than by a contrary mode of procedure. For, in the first place, Government has not now the means of discharging, in Assam, all those responsibilities which properly belong to it, and it therefore seems unwise not to make such use as it legitimately can of a body of English gentlemen, who if encouraged and trusted, besides looking after their own interests, might also do a world of good. The majority of the Assistants who first went up to the Tea Districts were not of that class that Government could well repose great confidence in; but tea planting, though a hard life, is eminently a profession which gentlemen's sons may follow, and we have now in Assam a large sprinkling of the sons, brothers, and nephews of the Civil and Military servants of Government, and others equally well born and bred. Several Officers, and some of the very best of them, have left the Assam Commission to go into tea; and each cold season the mail steamers bring out a host of young men of the highest respectability to be employed as Assistants on the now numerous large London Tea Companies' Estates. A nephew of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, I am told, went to Dibrúghur last cold weather, and I myself sent up to Cáchár a nephew of the late Viceroy, Lord Elgin, who is now in charge of one of the Central Cáchár Tea Company's Estates. I could mention a very large number of well connected gentlemen and gentlemen's sons who are now so employed, but it is unnecessary. It is good for England, it is good for India, that so many young men of these classes should be placed in this position, and from this view, as well as from every other view, it is desirable that, as far as possible, some trust should be reposed in them, for without it they cannot be made to feel the responsibilities of their position.

The position of the planter similar to that of the captain of a ship at sea.

93. The position of the tea planter in Assam is not the same as that of the coffee planter in Ceylon, or sugar planter in Mauritius or the West Indies, nor yet of the sheep farmer in South Australia. The former are comparatively near to centres of civilization; and the latter do not require to employ large bodies of laborers. The tea planter in charge of an out-garden in Assam or Cachar is placed as it were on an oasis in the desert; and I cannot find a more appropriate parallel to his position than that of the captain of a ship at sea. With three or four hundred laborers under his authority, it is obvious that, on the ground of public morals, if on no other, he ought to exercise certain powers of maintaining propriety and

good discipline, and that if he be not invested with them by others, he must resort to the unsatisfactory proceeding of investing himself with them. The Assam Company employ no less than 8,000 laborers, a body of men equal in number to a good sized division of the British Army. Their Superintendent, Mr. Smith, has 1,000 of these under his immediate superintendence and control at their head factory at Nazirah, and taking a practical view of the question, it must be clear that it would be as difficult for a man so situated to exact the strict performance of duty, and generally to maintain good order and discipline amongst so large a body of men, had he to carry all petty cases liable to occur daily to a Civil Court, eight or ten miles off, as for the Commanding Officer of a battalion of soldiers to rule his men without the aid of the Mutiny Act; or, as more apposite, I will say, as difficult as for the captain of a merchantman to govern his ship if deprived of the benefit of the Merchant Shipping Act. And in regard to the propriety of some "Contract Law" in its applicability to the laborers of tea planters, as I have adduced this comparison, I will further illustrate it by summarizing the following clauses of this Act (XVII. and XVIII. of Victoria) which provide—

Illustration from Acts XVII. and XVIII. of Victoria, commonly called the Merchant Shipping Act.

"(246.) That the master, or any mate, or the owner, ship's husband, or consignee may, in any place in Her Majesty's dominions, with or without the assistance of the Local Police Officers or Constables, who are hereby directed to give the same if required, or also at any place out of Her Majesty's dominions, if and so far as the laws in force at such place permit, apprehend him (a deserter) without first obtaining a warrant, and if it is practicable, bring him before a Court, or detain him for four-and-twenty hours for that purpose, or if there is no such Court at or near the place, at once convey him on board."

"(247.) That whenever any seaman or apprentice is brought before any Court 'for having neglected or refused to join or proceed to sea in any ship in which he is engaged to serve, or for having deserted or otherwise absented himself without leave,' such Court may, if the master, or owner, or his agent so requires it, 'instead of committing the offender to prison, cause him to be conveyed on board,' or deliver him to the master or any mate for that purpose, and may order any costs and expenses properly incurred by the master, &c., to be deducted from any wages then earned, or which by virtue of the existing agreement may be earned afterwards.

"(248.) That seamen imprisoned for desertion or absence without leave, as provided for in the aforesaid clauses, or for having committed any other breach of discipline, may be sent on board by any Justice before the termination of the sentence.

"(257.) That every person who, by any means whatsoever, persuades, or attempts to persuade, any seaman or apprentice to neglect to join, or to proceed to sea in, or to desert from, any ship shall for *each* such offence, in respect of *each* such seaman or apprentice, incur a penalty not exceeding £10; and every person who artfully harbours or secrets such seaman or apprentice as aforesaid, shall incur a penalty not exceeding £20."

Mr. Smith, the Superintendent of the Assam Company.

94. Mr. Smith, if the parties consent to it, adjudicates all his own petty cases. He complains of interference on the part of the Police, but he states that in a period of eight years no complaint has ever been made against him before the Magistrate, and as Assamese are not backward to send petitions to the Commissioner against Deputy Commissioners, if they think they are aggrieved, this looks as if there was not much abuse of power.

The only unfortunate occurrence with imported coolies, the result of the absence of a sound law.

95. Indeed the only one truly unfortunate *contretemps* between planter and laborers which I heard of during my tour in Assam, though it was generally cited as illustrative of the "brutality" of the planter, originated solely in the absence of some efficient law, and the circumstances of the case I allude to appear to me so confirmatory of this view that I shall narrate them.

Mr. Jameson of Sibsagur; his case.

96. Mr. Jameson, a large and influential tea planter in the Sibságur District, imported a small batch of coolies, twenty-seven in all, in last cold season, at a cost of Rupees 80 for each adult, and Rupees 40 for each child. On reaching Sibságur they seemed well satisfied, and so unsuspicious of any foul play was he that he did not take them out at once to his garden, but allowed them to remain a night in the station. During this interval, some persons gave them unfavorable reports of the garden, telling them that it was full of leeches, (in this I give the coolies' own version of the story,) or some other equally absurd reports, and on the following morning they positively refused to go to the garden. Mr. Jameson tried persuasion, but it was of no use; the coolies had determined not to go, and go they would

not. He then appealed to the Magistrate, who sent for them, enquired into their complaint, and finding it frivolous, informed them of the folly of their refusal, and strongly advised them to go to the plantation, but all to no purpose. Mr. Jameson applied several times to the Magistrate for his aid in forwarding the coolies to his garden; but the Magistrate did not feel authorized in compelling them to go against their will. The only course the law then left open to Mr. Jameson was to prosecute the coolies for breach of contract, and to put them in Jail; but this was unfortunately just the very thing he did not want to do, for, in the first place, it would have deprived *him* of the immediate services of the laborers, and it would have released *them* from their contract. He therefore prosecuted six coolies, taking care to select the ringleaders, and thinking by this means to induce the remainder to go to his factory. It was alleged, however, that he had selected members of families to send to Jail, in the hope that the temporary separation of husbands from wives, mothers from children, &c., &c., would compel compliance with his wishes, but this Mr. Jameson denied. He then got four of his Chuprassies, themselves imported coolies, and endeavoured with their aid, and no doubt some little physical persuasion, to induce the men to go to the factory. Two of the children were carried, and the remaining five were easily led away, but the adults ran off to the Kutchery, and did not go; about five weeks afterwards one of the children died. Information was immediately given to the Magistrate, and he called for a report on the case from the native Sub-Assistant Surgeon, who said that the child's death was caused by separation from its mother. Mr. Jameson, in appeal, stated that the child was between four and five years of age, and the eldest of the three younger children taken away by him, and that it died of fever; that "although *three months* had elapsed since the children were taken out to the Factory, of a sudden, without any intimation being given to me of what he intended to do, Lieutenant ——— with a force of Police, proceeds to my garden, and surrounds the lines with parade of authority, asks my Assistant if he has secreted the children in the forest, making endless ado, as if some great crime had been committed. Next I am arrested like a criminal, without any warrant, and told that unless I find bail to the extent of Rupees 200, I shall be taken into custody in person." The result was that the planter was tried for forcibly carrying away the children, (wrongful restraint, I believe, was the charge) and was fined Rupees 100; the coolies who went to Jail completed the period of their imprisonment; none of the batch ever went to

the plantation; they were employed at double rates of wages, I believe, as porters and otherwise in the station.

Lamentable results involved n this case; not due to any criminality on the part of the planter.

97. The conduct of the planter in this case was very severely animadverted upon by the local Judicial authorities, and as he took the law into his own hands, no doubt his proceeding was a strong measure; but there are very few men, and especially very few *Englishmen*, who will see twenty or thirty other men, each with £10 or £12 of their money in his pocket, or in whom, which is the samething, he has a vested interest to that amount, go quietly about their business, without resorting to a strong measure to restrain them, if he cannot do so by fair means, and the law will give him no redress. Whether, in this instance, the death of the child may or may not have been the consequences of his act, the planter, doubtless, at the time did not foresee it. He had no other object in view than that of obtaining the labor he had paid for, and as he knew that the grounds for breach of contract set up by the coolies were frivolous,* he, no doubt, thought he was justified in equity, if not in the eyes of the law, in what he did. It cannot be reasonably supposed that he had the smallest intention of committing a criminal offence, and the lamentable result which followed, if at all attributable to his act, a conclusion which the sentence of the Court, if not the circumstances of the case, disproves, was probably due to the carelessness and inattention of the Natives to whose care he entrusted the children. Had the Magistrate been able to deal with the case, all would have gone well.

* All tea plantations in Assam are infested with leeches in the rains.

Necessity for Government providing a remedy against imported coolies breaking their contracts.

98. At the same time I must state that I by no means wish to pass any opinion upon the merits of this particular case. I adduce it simply and solely as one which, to my mind, establishes most forcibly—if the importation of coolies to Assam be carried on under the sanction of Government—the necessity of protecting the planter against such wholesale ruin as must overtake him if, after spending very large sums of money in importing laborers at his own expense, they may be reduced or alarmed into transferring their labor to the plantations of other planters who have paid nothing for it, or to Government public works. The inducement in such a case for a man to take the law into his own hands is, in my opinion, too strong, and the simplest and only means of preventing his doing so is to find him a *legal* remedy.

99. The new law, if it could be carried out, makes ample provision for this evil; and in this respect it is a great boon to planters; but in other respects I doubt if it will give satisfaction. Objection is already taken to fixing a minimum rate of wages, and the maximum time a laborer shall be made to work, and other interference in the details of the planters' work. Restrictions upon the number of hours' labor in steaming cotton factories, needle factories, and other employments which shorten life may be necessary; but I have not heard before that field labor is detrimental to health, and there can be no doubt that where, as in this matter, no case has been made out against the planter of systematic ill-treatment, or of attempting to defraud his laborers, and there does not consequently appear to be any real necessity for legislative interference, these matters are always better adjusted when settled between the employer and the laborer themselves.*

Objections already raised to the new law.

* Since this was written, several Tea Companies have given orders to stop all extensions until the clauses of the Act fixing the price of labor are repealed.

100. But to sum up this imperfect review of this deeply interesting and highly important question—a question the right solution of which is for more interesting and far more important to the Government of India than it possibly can be to the tea planter, I will state concisely the case as it appears to me. Before doing so, however, I would pray that the object in view be not lost sight of, *viz.*, that though ostensibly the question is simply one of supplying coolies to the tea plantations of Assam, in reality it is one of supplying a new laboring population to a half-depopulated Province of India, rich in productive resources beyond all conception. The same objects and reasons which induce Her Majesty's Government to encourage, in every legitimate way, the introduction of foreign labor into those British colonies where population is scant, and capital available to employ it, will be admitted to exist here as forcibly as they do there, and there is consequently no necessity to enquire into them. Suffice it to say that every coolie, after the expiry of his three years' contract, should he settle in the Province, *(to which end I would point out no encouragement whatever is now held out)* is or might be a clear gain to Government; and so well are the advantages of the introduction of foreign labor understood elsewhere, that at Port Natal the Government actually imports the coolies itself, pays all

My own view of the labor question; condemnation of the present system of licensed contractors.

expenses for them, and hands them over to the planter, recovering the amount by easy instalments from him after he has commenced to profit by their labor. I do not recommend such a system here, as, whether practicable or not, I am certain it would not be adopted; but whatever system be finally approved, I have no hesitation in saying that it ought not to be the present system of licensed contractors, with their numerous depôts, each with its special army of crimps scattered broadcast over the country. Whether we look at the question in the interest of the coolie, the planter, or the Government, such a system cannot be fruitful of good results. All the evils connected with the emigration of coolies to Assam and Cáchár, which have been brought to light by the several Committees which have deliberated on the subject, and for which some special cause has been assigned, are attributable, I do believe, to the adoption of this system, a system in which the evils complained of are inherent, and hence the reason why none of the remedies proposed have been, or will be, successful as long as it is maintained. There are at present in this city nineteen licensed Contractors, each having his separate depôt in and about Entally and Sealdah, most of which, I have little hesitation in saying, are not fit for the purposes to which they are applied.* I have myself visited several, and of these, one or two appeared to me to be even tolerably open and airy. Things at the Calcutta depôts are, doubtless, better than they were; but I could paint a picture of some things in these depôts which, if not quite so disagreeable as that sketched by the Committee of 1862, would still be by no means pleasant. It is here, I am convinced, and in the wretched places at Raneegunge and Kooshtea, which hitherto have done duty for depôts, that the germs of those diseases are generated which afterwards break out on board the steamers. And of this I have little doubt, for nothing can be finer than the air on the river Brahmaputra, and with good food, sufficient space, and ordinary attention to cleanliness, the trip is eminently calculated to invigorate, and not to debilitate, the coolie, and that it would do so, provided he were put on board in perfect health, is sufficiently proved by the fact that sickness seldom or never has been known to break out at an advanced stage of the voyage. In the steamer and flats in which I went up to Assam we carried about 500 coolies, and though we brought cholera with us from Kooshtea, all symptoms of disease disappeared after we had been a week on the river.

* Since this was written, several of these have closed their depôts, the proprietors having been ruined by the rascality of their recruiters.

The strongest objection to the present system is, that it renders all Government precautions nugatory.

101. But the strongest objection to the existing system is, that it renders all the precautions taken by Government to insure the ordinances on the subject of land labor transport being carried out wholly nugatory; and this evil must increase as tea plantations are multiplied and emigration extends. Captain Burbank, the present Superintendent of Labor Transport at Calcutta, is no doubt a conscientious, zealous and active public servant; but were he ten times as conscientious and zealous as he is, it will be apparent that it would be a physical impossibility for him, with an office in Calcutta, and only two Assistants, one on Rupees 115 and the other on Rupees 82-8 per mensem, to inspect 19 or 20 scattered depôts, situated from three to four miles from his office; to inspect the depôts of all the Foreign Emigration Agencies, some of which lie four or five miles in opposite directions; to measure and inspect all the vessels, river and sea-going, licensed to carry coolies; to examine *all* the food, and *all* the clothing supplied by *all* these contractors; to ascertain personally that each individual coolie understands the nature of his contract; to be present at the dispatch of every batch of coolies, possibly *at the same time* from Sealdah, Port Canning and Garden Reach; and besides all this out-door work, to attend in-doors to the preparation of those mortuary and other statistical Returns so urgently required, and other office work which, if efficiently performed, would alone take up the *whole* time of any single individual. And these remarks apply equally, if not more forcibly, to the Medical Inspector, for on the efficient discharge of his all-important duties depends the sanitation of these depôts and that the coolies are put on board in good health; and if he is not burthened with duties connected with Foreign emigration, he has several other Government appointments—*one* of which alone would require the undivided attention of an ordinary medical man,—besides private practice.

Impossibility, under the present system, of Government Officers performing the duties assigned to them.

102. It must be borne in mind, moreover, that however active, efficient and vigilant the supervision of the Superintendent and Medical Inspector may be, the facilities afforded under the present system for concealment are so great that it would be almost impossible for them to ascertain all that they are required to know by the ordinances on the subject. Thus, cholera, small-pox, or any other contagious disease, may be raging in a depôt, and how is it to be ascertained? The contractor can hardly be expected to report, nor is he to

be blamed; were he to do so his depôt might be closed, or, what is the same thing, every planter's agent would refuse to take his coolies. Still less can any of his dependents be expected to do so, nor yet the coolies, for both are equally under the contractor's control; and the sick, the dying, and the dead can easily and safely be "put away." Very excellent rules, no doubt, are provided for the guidance of the contractors, but as there is no one to see them carried out, they may do so or not as they please. In many respects they do their best, I believe; but, however willing and however anxious they may be to carry out the wishes of Government, they could not do so if they would. Nineteen or twenty really good and healthy sites, with accommodation for four or five hundred coolies, cannot be got in this crowded city under a cost they could never afford. A properly regulated depôt should be high, dry, and have a good circulation of air, and besides *kutcha* barracks and cook-houses, should have a tank of clean and pure water, a good hospital separated from the general department, and an efficient medical establishment. And it is most essential that it should be most carefully looked after, for, as I before said, it is in the Calcutta depôts, in my belief, that the seeds of disease are germinated. But with the existing large number of coolie depôts, it seems to me impossible to attain the desired end, and of course, as the fancied lucrativeness of the trade attracts more persons to enter it, and more depôts are opened, the evils now existing will be proportionably increased. Indeed it is plain that with every new depôt that is opened, the work of the Superintendent of Labor Transport (with the exception of passing each individual coolie, which is a matter of number,) must be doubled, that is to say, if there are two depôts he has *twice* as much work, and if there are twenty he has *twenty times* as much work, as if there was only one, and that every *increase* in the development of emigration, under the present system, must consequently bring with it a corresponding *decrease* in the efficiency of the machinery of Government for protection, superintendence, and medical inspection.

Remedies for existing evils.

103. There are but one or two remedies for this state of things, either to have five or six Superintendents and the same number of Medical Inspectors, to be increased as required; or to have one central depôt, and one Agent or Superintendent, and one Medical Officer. But as the first plan would provide but for a small part of the existing evils, and entail endless and increasing expenditure, the second is the *only* one affording a prospect of success. It

seems essential, moreover, that the Superintendent and the Medical Officer should reside on the premises, and devote their whole time to the duties of the depôt. Receiving or rest houses, with moderate establishments, might be provided at Raneegunge and at Kooshtea, but both should be under the control of the Agent in Calcutta. There need be no longer delay at either place than is absolutely necessary, and any coolie falling suddenly ill should, if possible, be sent to Calcutta. I have seen it proposed, in correspondence in the newspapers, that the central depôt should be at Kooshtea, as it is the place of debarkation, and as obviating the necessity of having a double inspection, but I do not think *Kooshtea a healthy place*, whereas I think Calcutta as healthy as any place in the plains of Bengal; and if proper "correspondence," as it is termed in France, is established between the Railway and Steamer Authorities, there need be no necessity whatever for any inspection at Kooshtea. All tea companies' and tea planters' agents, moreover, reside in Calcutta, and they would very naturally strongly object to any regulation which would prevent them inspecting the coolies before dispatch. It would be difficult to do away at once with contractors and their recruiters, for, until planters find out the advantage and have the means of sending men from their own factories to recruit for them—men who have been sometime on the plantations, who know the locality, the climate, the water, the nature of the work, and the amount of the wages, and are willing to invite their relatives and friends to migrate to the new country,—without some intermediate agency, they would find it difficult to provide themselves with laborers. But the work of this special agency should cease as soon as the coolies enter the central depôt, and be then taken up by the authorities of that depôt, though no objection need be raised to any company or planter having a person to look especially after his own coolies to see that they are not changed.

Rest houses, &c. Proposed plan disapproved by Government of Bengal.

104. Rest houses also in connection with the central depôt, and under the immediate control of Magistrates, would be required at each chief landing place on the Brahmaputra, where, if landed late in the day, and in cases of planters at very distant factories not having had timely notice to be in attendance to receive them, they would be taken care of. For the details of organization it would be necessary, of course, to provide special rules; but were the plan here sketched adopted, I think it would prevent, if not all, a great many of the evils now complained of. Some such plan was proposed to the Government

of Bengal by the Committee which considered this question in 1862, and after examining many witnesses, inspecting most of the depôts in Calcutta and Kooshtea, and very maturely deliberating on the subject, it was proposed again by the Committee which was appointed by the Government of Bengal last year, but their recommendations do not seem to have met with approval. Some persons, I believe, object to congregating coolies, on the ground that if an epidemic does break out, it will be more difficult to deal with; but there would probably never be more, at one time, than 1,000 or 1,500 coolies in the depôt, and that for a few days; and what is that more than are perpetually congregated in the lines of a native Infantry Regiment. At Barrackpore the lines of the native troops are in the closest proximity; there is only a road between each Regiment, and I have seen 5,000 or 6,000 men in them for years; but the hospitals are not in the lines, as are the hospitals of such coolie depôts as have any; they are half a mile off.

Return of deaths of coolies shipped in 1864-65.

105. That some further attention to this highly important subject is necessary, the following return of deaths on the voyage for the last official year will, I think, show :—

Memorandum of number of Coolies shipped, and percentage of Deaths, during voyage from Kooshtea to the Tea Districts, for the year 1864-65.

Tea Districts.	No. shipped.	Percentage of deaths during voyage.
Assam...	11,768	3·04
Cáchár	15,598	3·05
Sylhet	916	2·19
Total ...	28,282	

Percentage of mortality for a period of 3 years, 1861-63, from Official Returns.

The average mortality of the native troops in Bengal is about 1·50, and of Europeans about 3 per cent, per annum.* The mortality amongst the troops going to Assam last year on the same river, and in the same or similar steamers, was, amongst the

* *European Troops.*			*Natives.*	
Men.	Women.	Children.	Fighting Men.	Prisoners.
3·03	4·95	9·03	1·51	8·28

natives no more than it would have been on land,* yet amongst the coolies we have the enormous average of 3 per cent., though the voyage to Cáchár in a steamer only occupies ten days. And these returns bear out my surmise that the germs of disease are, as a general rule, brought with the coolies from the depôts, and not generated on the voyage, because though the voyage to Síbságur and Lukimpúr, those Districts of Assam to which the great majority of the coolies go, is twice as long; the percentage of deaths is not greater, but even a shade less. It is but fair, however, to add that country boats cannot go to Assam in the rains, while they can go to Cáchár all the year round, and it is believed that the mortality in boats is greater than in steamers, though, until last year, when an epidemic broke out in a very large batch of coolies sent up in boats to Assam, the coolies despatched in boats were decidedly the most healthy. But these proportions give way altogether when we come to compare them with the fearful and appalling loss of life which has lately taken place by deaths from drowning among the emigrants shipped from Calcutta and Port Canning for foreign ports; however, as this subject is perhaps hardly within the scope of this Memorandum, I may pass it over with the remark that when India is itself in many parts so prostrated for want of labor, if a trade involving not only a risk to human life more terrible than the slave-trade, but looking to the great value of strong and able-bodied laborers, such serious and positive loss to the country, cannot be stopped without giving offence to our neighbours, the less encouragement that is given to it the better.

* Extract from Report of Deputy Inspector-General of Hospitals, Barrackpore, 14th December 1854.—There were 587 Sepoys and 200 Camp-followers on board the two flats; the flats were somewhat crowded, and I urged on the Medical Officer to look well after cleanliness. Captain Norman, the Assistant Quarter-Master General who was present, assured me that troops going up to Assam were rarely attacked with cholera, while coolies rarely escaped, although the latter are much less crowded than the troops. The explanation is that troops being under discipline, greater attention is given to sanitory arrangement, cleanliness and ventilation.

106. Should, however, a central depôt for emigrants to the Tea Districts of Assam and Cáchár be established, with a distinct and separate Government agency of its own, in correspondence with Magistrates, and having the direction and control of all rest-houses, I think the plan will not meet with a full measure of success unless the positive interest the State has in this department be fairly recognized by its bearing a reasonable and legitimate share of the expense that these arrangements necessitate. It appears to me that if the expenses of recruiting, of feeding, of clothing, of housing, and of transporting the laborer, which, it is known, are already

The success of any new system contingent on the interest of the Government therein being fairly recognized.

enormous, all fall on the planter, the Government may very legitimately bear all the expenses of superintendence, protection, and medical inspection. These services to the laborer, it must be borne in mind, are not performed *for* the planter, but, as it were, *against* him. He cannot make use of any of these Officers to protect him from being defrauded by his contractors or recruiters. He therefore naturally says, "I do not want all this supervision, and if it arises from distrust in me and my agents, then why should I pay for it?"

Protectors, their advantage questionable.

107. As to Protectors who, it is provided by the contract law, shall periodically visit the plantations of tea planters, their advantage again to the Government, the planter, or the coolie, is very questionable; for unless the duties of the office be performed with singular integrity, good judgment and discretion, the Officer will prove either a nullity or else very mischievous. To give reasonable opportunity to all laborers to complain against their employers, if they are ill-treated, is very right and proper. Every Inspecting Officer of a British regiment is compelled to put the question, "Any complaints?"—and to investigate them there and then should they be preferred; or it would even be proper in him to initiate the fullest enquiries if he had good reason to believe that grounds for them existed; but anything-like *encouragement* to the men to complain against a Commanding Officer would materially affect the discipline of a regiment, and in principle, there is little difference in the case of such an Officer and the case of a manager in charge of a plantation with 300 or 400 coolies under a contract of servitude for three or five years. If, on the other hand, the Protector, who, if paid for by the planter, is to a certain extent his servant, and who, it may be mentioned, at all out factories *must* be his guest, thinks it his business, as well as his interest, to make things appear pleasant, he will of course be useless to the coolie, and as relieving the planter of the responsibility he otherwise would be invested with, worse than useless to the Government. I would prefer, I repeat, to see planters more trusted; and if, for appearance sake, the State must have Protectors, it is only fair that the State should pay for them.

Public Works; state of the road.

108. And as so entirely dependent upon the state of the labor market, I may here notice the Department of Public Works in Assam. I have opened this Memorandum with these words, "there is no road from Calcutta to Assam," and it is even so; and the frequent allusions I have made throughout this Memo-

randum to the evil effects of the absence of all public means of locomotion render it unnecessary for me to add much more on the subject here. Suffice it to say that, speaking generally, in Lower Assam there are no roads at all, and in Upper Assam, *i. e.*, from Golaghât to Debrúghur, though there is a fair embankment, it is only now that a commencement at making culverts and bridges has been made. In some parts of Lower Assam attempts at raised earth-works can be traced out, and that running for about twenty miles south-west of Tezpúr, commonly called Vincent's Road, might very easily be made a good kutcha road; but for the rest the *dâk* even cannot be sent by the "Grand Trunk Road" from Gowhatty, the capital of the Province, to Nowgong, the nearest civil station; and it will suffice to indicate the condition of the remainder to state that, during last rains, a planter, who had the temerity to try and make his way along it to the next civil station, Golaghât, nearly lost his life in the attempt. Even in the cold weather if the traveller once gets off the road, it is no easy task for him to find it again, and in this manner I more than once during my tour lost my way. Certain local funds are allowed for the repairs of the district and station roads, but the amount is altogether insufficient, and scant as these funds are, either from inability on the part of Deputy Commissioners to superintend the works, want of establishments, want of confidence in others who would undertake the duty, if permitted, or paucity of laborers, these have never been all expended. Worse than all, what money is spent appeared to me to be misspent, for it is spent in cultivating the roads, and not in making and repairing them. That is to say, the jungle is first burnt down, and the road is then well hoed or dug up. The idea, I assume, is to kill the roots of the grass, but these go deeper than ordinary hoeing will reach, and the only result is that the jungle, during the following rains, grows far more luxuriantly than ever, and by August is ten or fifteen feet high. The work, moreover, instead of being exacted free as it is in other countries, and as it very legitimately may be where turnpikes are not feasible, from the landholders and villagers for whose benefit it is done, at the lowest rate of wages, is made a means of unsettling the labor market. Wages being equal, I have no hesitation in saying that the laborer in Assam will always go to a tea plantation in preference to Government works, and, contrary to the belief in Calcutta, the reason is that he is better cared for and better treated by the planter. The Civil Officer, therefore, has usually appealed to the ruling idea which, as before mentioned, has been overstrained in Assam—the idea of "higher wages."

If the planter pays Rs. 5 a month, the Deputy Commissioner offers Rs. 6, and if the planter pays Rs. 6, the Deputy Commissioner offers Rs. 7. More labor is not obtained by this system, though it of course enables the coolies successfully to play off the competitors one against the other. He is master of the situation, and did he turn the opportunity to good account there would be less cause for regret, as *some one* would be benefitted; but unfortunately, as before explained, he spends the surplus in the "pernicious drug," and derives not the benefit that he in common with the whole community would have gained had he been compelled, as under the Rajas of Assam he would have been, to make roads and bridges for ordinary remuneration.

Serious consequences of a want of roads.

109. The serious consequences of a want of roads in *every* country are too well known to need elucidation here. If a man cannot get his produce to a market, the result is not, as some persons think, that the cultivator will sell it cheap, but rather that he will not produce, and why should he? The ryot in Assam is a sufficiently astute economist to see that there is no sound reason for it, and he does not therefore produce more than is sufficient for the support of himself and family. The results are, though attributable to other causes as well, that fifteen-sixteenths of the culturable land in Assam lie waste and pay no revenue to Government, and the physical energies of the people are not developed at all. But the most serious consequence of all, in a Province in the present circumstances of Assam, is, that owing to the absence of roads, there is not a wheeled carriage in the country. Some planters have introduced a few carts on their plantations, but, with this exception, the nearest approach to anything of the kind I saw during my tour in Assam was a *Khél-boat* (a hollowed tree or canoe) drawn by two buffaloes. I met it on the high road, in the neighbourhood of Nowgong, and I calculate that this even was a novelty, as it so frightened my pony that, having first deposited me in the ditch, he made off into the adjoining field. A very great portion of the rice, stick-lac, tea, cotton, in short of all the produce is exported from those parts of the country where there are no navigable rivers, and all the specie, machinery, Manchester goods, tea-lead, and other stores similarly imported into the country must be carried to and from the banks of the Brahmaputra on men's shoulders. This state of things obviously intensifies the difficulties of the labor question; and many a poor planter, pinched for means to carry on his plantation, is obliged to sit down and calculate whether, to leave his tea unsold at the factory for a twelve month,

or to take the labor off his garden to send it to the nearest river, is the lesser of two evils.

Effect of drying up the land revenue, and high wages, on the prosecution of public works.

110. It may be as well to add that the Government of Bengal has for some years been aware of the absolute necessity that exists for instituting an efficient measure of reform in this direction, as will be seen from the very urgent solicitations made to the Supreme Government by Sir John Peter Grant, when he was Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, about six years ago, without success. The Government of India, with the pressing demands upon it for other necessary purposes, could not sanction the expense of a large measure for Assam; and herein lies the proof of what I have urged in other parts of this paper, regarding the impolicy of drying up that main source of income, the land revenue, by selling the land outright at five shillings an acre, and the direct interest the local authorities have in inaugurating an improved system of settlement and assessment, and in abstaining as much as possible from any action calculated to interfere with that rate of wages which open competition between free laborers and private capitalists may determine to be fair and equitable. It is true that the deficiency of the land-rent has been compensated for by the large increase from the opium trade, but this can hardly be considered legitimate, or yet be depended upon. I have not been able to obtain an approximate idea of the entire number of imported laborers introduced into the Province of Assam by tea planters, because in the beginning no records were kept; but I have stated above that during the year 1864 they imported no less than 28,282 coolies, while I am informed that independent of the coolies imported for the purposes of the Bhután Field Force last year, the whole of the labor imported by Government for the prosecution of public works in Assam, from the first up to the close of last year, does not exceed 500 men. The plan adopted has been to bid high enough to take the labor from the planter; so that now the wages of local laborers have gone so high that I fear the rate must affect the wages of imported laborers, which, burthened as the importer is with an importing charge of not less than £12 to £14 a head for each *adult*, will be a very serious matter to Government, as well as to all planters who have large bodies of laborers on their plantations.

New trunk road; tributary roads necessary to our Military grip on the Province begun at the wrong end.

111. But I have already said enough on this subject; an apparently efficient main or trunk road has been projected, which, if carried out, will connect Assam with Bengal, and if a similar trunk line be extended along

the north bank, and communication be maintained with the interior on the one side and with the great river on the other, by a system of link roads made by the district authorities with local funds, and an improved organization of the ferries be established, the increase to the prosperity of this rich Province will in a short time be very manifest. The trunk lines of roads, however, will cost probably very much more than the amount of the estimate that has been made for them, as experience has shewn that Assam estimates are not very reliable, and most probably no allowance has been made for a further rise in the price of labor; but they are essential to the firmness of our Military grip on the Province. On this and on other points, however, connected with Military roads and bridges, from want of professional knowledge, I am unable to speak with authority, though I cannot help thinking that a beginning seems to have been made at the wrong end. It would have been preferable in my opinion to have commenced at the end nearest Bengal, as by so doing the road, as completed, might carry its labor and material, (iron girders, bridge-work, &c.) along with it, and thus save the enormous cost of employing steamers, besides bringing the Province, at the earliest possible date, into direct communication with the populous Districts of Eastern Bengal.

Planters will assist in making roads, but increase to the land revenue the main source.

112. In the construction and keeping up of the district roads the tea planters, as most directly interested, will be found the best and most efficient means of effecting the object in view; and many of them will willingly contribute considerable sums in aid of the funds available for this purpose. The Assam Company, since it has been established, has made upwards of one hundred miles of roads; the Bishnauth Tea Company, though only two years established, has already made twenty miles of roads; and others according to their means and necessities; but planters, with the great strain now put upon them by the increased and increasing cost of importing labor, cannot afford to be liberal in their outlay on public works, and the main legitimate source to which we must look for supplementing the means of Government is an increase of the land revenue, combined with a system of village contribution labor unpaid, or at very low rates of wages.

Stationary state of the cultivation and its causes.

113. Regarding the capability of the ryots to bear some taxation, I have before expressed my opinion. In Scotland, where less than a century ago two-thirds of the land was moor and the population was by no means dense, and where there are still vast wastes, we do not find that culturable land is rented

for a sixpence under its full value. Wastes are leased for fifteen and twenty years at from two-and-sixpence to five shillings an acre, and money in considerable sums is advanced at reasonable rates of interest by wealthy landlords to tenants who undertake to break up fresh wastes, and for drainage and other measures of land improvement. So much to the advantage of the country, moreover, is this measure thought that money is similarly advanced, under certain rules, by Government, and so successful has the plan proved that a large and influential Limited Liability Company has very lately been established for extending its beneficial influence. It is thus that the rent-rolls of many noblemen and landed proprietors in Scotland have been trebled within the last half century. We have not been in possession of Assam half a century yet; still it is upwards of a quarter of a century since the Assam Company was first established, and without going back to the commencement of the occupation by the British in 1826, I cannot but think that in a country in which so much rich and exceedingly fertile land lies convenient for all who choose to cultivate it, and on the people of which have been conferred those coveted boons of liberty, equality, and perfect freedom from taxation or imposts of any kind, considerable progress might reasonably have been expected within this period. In Assam, however, we look for it in vain. From the following table, which I abstract from Mr. Moffat Mills' Report before alluded to, it will be seen that the increase in the land revenue for the whole of Assam Proper, a Province which is almost as large as England, for the five years ending 1853, was £3,500, and in the two Districts of Central Assam there was an actual falling off:—

	Year.	Púras.*	Rupees.	Decrease.
Durrung	1848-49 1852-53	1,75,211 1,67,774	1,60,285 1,57,795	Rs. 2,490 Decrease.
		Bigahs.		
Nowgong	1848-49 1852-53	5,50,299 5,28,793	1,29,999 1,29,873	Rs. 26 Increase.
		Púras.		
Sibsagur	1848-49 1852-53	1,26,123 1,35,505	1,07,080 1,14,463	Rs. 7,383 Increase.
		Acres.		
Luckimpore	1848-49 1852-53	21,799½ 24,838½	37,418 46,563	Rs. 9,083 Increase.
		Púras.		
Kamroop	1848-49 1852-53	3,57,787 3,59,023	2,74,480 2,95,793	Rs. 21,513

*An acre and a quarter.

And the subjoined table will shew that if we extend the enquiry we shall not obtain better results :—

Year.	Púras* under cultivation.	Revenue.
1834-35	No records.	No records.
1844-45	7,034—336	Rupees 7,34,336
1854-55	7,037—888	„ 8,30,192
1859-60	7,071—158	„ 9,16,075
1863-64	7,073—815	„ 10,68,778

It thus appears that for the ten years ending 1855 there was next to no increase at all in the breadth of land under cultivation ; a very slight increase in the five years ending 1860, and next to no increase in the four years ending 1864.

Continued stagnation in spite of general rise of prices.

114. And this decrease, for having regard to the law of population, stagnation—in a country in which much land is waste and from which there is no emigration—implies decrease, is the more remarkable when we reflect on the very great rise that has taken place in the price, not only of the great staple of the country, but in all other kinds of produce. I should have entered more particularly into this point when treating of the propriety of raising the land assessment, but the want of statistics compelled me to rest satisfied with dealing generally with many questions which I should have desired to examine in greater detail. On this point, moreover, the information I was able to collect, even taking into consideration the comparative insulation of each station or centre of cultivation, seemed somewhat conflicting. Thus I was informed that the annual profit from a púra of rice land in Luckimpúr ten years ago was from Rs. 2 to Rs. 2-8; and that at present it is from Rs. 10 to Rs. 11; that the wages of labor were then from Rs. 2 to Rs. 2-8 a month, and that now they are Rs. 6 and Rs. 7; that the cost of living to a laborer was then about Rs. 2, and that now it is Rs. 6 a month. In Síbsagúr, (the adjoining District) I was told that ten years ago the wages of

* An acre and a quarter.

labor were Rs. 2-8, and the cost of living Rs. 1-8, while wages are now Rs. 7-8, and the cost of living Rs. 3 only per mensem. Again, in Nowgong the average profit from a púra of rice land ten years ago was stated to be not more than Rs. 6 while now it is Rs. 20, and the wages of labor is said to have risen from Rs. 2-6 to Rs. 6 per mensem, whilst across the river in the Durrung District the profits on a púra of rice are said to have doubled within the last ten years, and to be now Rs. 12; while the wages of labor have risen only from Rs. 3 to Rs. 5.* Not much in detail can be made out of these figures; but one broad fact is very clear, *viz.*, that the value of labor and produce, indeed of everything except land, has been rising enormously. This state of things indicates the growth of wealth, or in other words increased and increasing prosperity, and that Government, according to the rule before alluded to, should share in this increase is not only desirable and in every sense right and proper, but absolutely necessary for the benefit of the community, and that progress may be maintained.

* Captain Lamb, the Deputy Commissioner, Tezpore, estimated the profits at the present time (1865) on a púra of land on the several crops to be as follows:—Rice, Rs. 12; Kullie, Rs. 12 to Rs. 14; Mustard, Rs. 22; Cotton, Rs. 63; Sugarcane, Rs. 53; Tea, Rs. 120 or more.

Extraordinary increase in the total revenues of the Province.

115. And the following figures, which give the revenues of Assam from all sources, will shew that the result from this point of view has been highly satisfactory:—

Years.	Total Revenue.	Total Cultivation.
1836-37	No records ...	No records.
1844-45	Rupees 7,67,918	7,31,336 púras.
1854-55	„ 9,65,521	7,37,888 „
1859-60	„ 13,99,198	7,71,158 „
1863-64	„ 22,66,970	7,73,815 „
1864-65	„ 26,30,524*	No returns „

* Not including income tax.

The area of land under cultivation in 1844-45, or twenty years ago, is set down as 7,34,336 púras or 9,17,920 acres, so it is apparent that the collections of the country from all sources were little more than 12 annas per acre for each acre of cultivated land, the whole of which being rent, and rent at the lowest possible rate, there was no taxation at all; or if we even consider the land assessment a tax, which, as Government is the sole landlord, it is impossible to do, without altogether eliminating the item of rent, it will barely reach 8*d.* a head. In the ten years ending 1855 the whole revenues of the Province were still very slightly over 1 Rupee an acre of the cultivation all round. But in the five years ending 1859-60, the revenues of Assam, which were before creeping, began literally to bound. For this period the increase is £134,677, or an increase at the rate of nearly £10,000 a year; and for the next four years it is £867,772, or an increase at the rate of upwards of £20,000 a year. Nothing possibly could be more gratifying to the financier than these results. That *in five* short years the entire revenues of a Province, which had been in our possession for *thirty-five* years without making any progress whatsoever, should have doubled, seems almost incredible; yet the above figures are obtained from official returns, and may be assumed to be correct. Such an increase, if not elsewhere, is in India probably unprecedented.

Cause and sources of this extraordinary increase in the revenues.

116. It remains to enquire into the cause and sources of this extraordinary and rapid increase in the revenues of Assam; and as to the cause, the period of the change at once indicates it to be "tea planting." Between 1856 and 1858 this cultivation, which had been abandoned by Government as a failure, began to be developed by private enterprize, and in 1859, '60, '61, '62, it was pursued with much energy by many enterprising persons, who, taking advantage of a period of very cheap money in 1863, sold their tea estates, the large majority of which had been made cheaply with local labor, to parties who formed the numerous Tea Companies now on the Calcutta market. Some of these had not sufficient capital to work them to a successful issue, and in consequence of the expense of importing labor, they are now in difficulties; but the majority are strong, and many influential London Companies, with large capital, have been formed for the cultivation of tea, so we may anticipate a growing and steady increase to the revenues of Assam, provided no check is given to the industry by injudicious legislation or unnecessary interference.

Advantages of tea cultivation to the invester and to Government.

* An acre of tea costs to work it about £12 per annum. It yields a little in the third year, and pays its expenses in the fourth. So, say an acre of old tea costs £40 to bring it to good bearing, on the most favorable soil, with good cultivation, it will yield 800lbs., which at 2 shillings is £80. Take an average of 400lbs., and it leaves a very large margin for profit.

117. That tea, if properly cultivated, will, under present circumstances, return from 25 to 30* per cent. on the original capital laid out on it, there can be no doubt whatever; and as soon as the London Companies have, by extended cultivation, recovered the premium which original sellers by waiting five years for any return to their outlay had a fair right to claim, they will, if properly managed, as the Assam and Jorehaut Companies, obtain this rate of profit. That this cultivation then will prove remunerative to investers is very plain. But I have frequently been asked what use tea planting and tea planters can be to Government and to Eastern Bengal; and when it is shewn, as it has been shewn above, that this industry has raised the Government revenues of the Province by a fifth in one year, and doubled them in five, I may consider that the question has been satisfactorily answered.

Increase to the revenue not wholly satisfactory; statistics of the opium revenue.

118. But, although the fact that capital has been pouring into this outlying Province at such a rate as to admit of these results, must certainly appear to be a source of self-gratulation to Government, it is unfortunately, as will be seen by the following table, shewing the details of the collections, not without its alloy :—

Revenues of Assam, 1864-65.

Districts.	Land.	Forest.	Miscellaneous.	Excise.	Stamp.	Total.
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
Cossyah Hills	328	110	43,383	409	1,162	45,392
Durrung	1,66,295	981	100	2,00,135	6,478	3,73,989
Gwálpára	14,326	...	1,976	1,02,771	15,294	1,34,367
Kamrúp	3,63,032	1,840	40	2,23,359	22,432	6,10,703
Luckimpúr	77,157	14,480	5,245	29,836	8,077	4,03,895
Nowgong	1,77,907	207	7,244	2,47,885	13,463	4,46,706
Síbságur	2,17,382	...	...	3,82,427	15,663	6,15,472
Total	10,16,427	17,618	57,988	14,55,922	82,569	26,30,524*

* Exclusive of income tax.

It is thus clear that the extraordinarily rapid increase in the revenues of Assam is due to the increased consumption of one article alone, *viz.*, the *pernicious drug*, the sale-proceeds of which *exceed* half the revenues of the whole Province, and herein lies the proof of that which I have stated above, (paragraph 76,) that Government receives a drawback of one-half, and in some instances of two-thirds of the wages paid by all its *employés* and tea planters to local laborers throughout the Province. It is moreover a fact that the gross revenue raised in Assam from opium is 53 per cent., or more than than half the revenue, from the same source from the whole of Bengal, and it seems difficult, if not impossible, to check the consumption. Up to 1859 the poppy was cultivated by the people themselves, and it was thought that the prohibition put upon this cultivation, and the introduction of the high-priced Government opium, would very much reduce the consumption, but, as far as we can judge, it appears to have had quite a contrary effect; while the people, instead of giving Government credit for its good intentions, accuse the authorities of stopping a favored cultivation for their own benefit; and not without apparent reason. With the same praiseworthy object the price was raised in the beginning of last year from fourteen shillings to twenty shillings per pound; but the rise in price, though equal to an increase of 40 per cent., made no impression whatever on the actual consumption, which shewed even a small increase, as for 1863-64 it was 153,800lbs and in 1864-65 155,200lbs, yet as the tendency was to increase at a much higher rate, it cannot be said that this measure was altogether without beneficial effects; and as these statistics are of high value, I append a Statement which will shew the influence of this tendency for the last five years, or since the cultivation in Assam was prohibited.

Year.	Quantity sold.	Gross Revenue.
	lbs.	Rs.
1859-60	32,720	2,14,044
1860-61	61,840	4,32,936
1861-62	1,11,440	7,79,926
1862-63	1,40,560	9,84,130
1863-64	1,53,800	11,35,462
1864-65	1,55,200	14,35,426

Opinion of the Board of Salt and Opium on this subject.

119. On this subject the Board of Revenue, in their preliminary Report on the Administration of the Excise Department during the year ending 30th April 1865, remark as follows:—

"6. It is satisfactory to observe that the large increase of revenue this year has been obtained upon a very small increase of consumption. This is accounted for by the selling price having been raised from 14 to 20 rupees a seer (2lbs.) in most of the Districts about the beginning of last year.

"7. The rise in the Assam opium revenue during the last few years is of course due, in the main, to the prohibition of the native cultivation; but a large element in it is also unquestionably the development of the agricultural prosperity of the revenue through the enterprise of the tea planters. The Board are informed that many of the tea planters provide* themselves with opium for the use of their laborers.

* This is a mistake. All tea planters employing Assamese laborers are obliged to keep a supply of opium, or all their laborers would desert the factory in a day.

"8. Except in Assam, it will be noticed that there is no material increase in the opium revenue. It is not to be desired."

Large consumption of Government opium purchased with the capital expended by tea planters.

120. The Board in the 7th paragraph of this report are not quite clear. The large consumption of *Government* opium is due, of course, to the local supply being cut off, but the increase in the revenue is due undoubtedly *solely* to the influx of the tea planters' capital, which has enabled the people to buy it. Were it otherwise,* the consumption would have been greatest immediately prior to the first prohibition of the indigenous cultivation, and would have gradually fallen off as the people became accustomed to do without it; but the Government opium is, of course, better than the native drug, and in Assam, as in China, the opium-eater will pay any price to obtain it; still it is a luxury, and the people who can pay an amount equal to nearly double the land-rent of the entire Province, for one so pernicious to their health and strength, cannot be badly off; and if the funds so obtained are spent in improving the means of locomotion, and also in measures of sanitation, the means will, in some measure, be compensated for by the ends that will be obtained.

Restricting the facilities heretofore afforded by Government for sending silver into the Province, a short-sighted policy.

121. If then such a very large proportion of the silver imported into the Province by tea planters ultimately finds its way into the Government Treasuries, it might reasonably and naturally be expected that Government would see its interest in taking some pains to facilitate the flow of silver to where it can so readily be laid hold of; but the Financial Department took a different view of the question, and on the grounds that the State lost by keeping

available in local treasure-chests sufficient funds to meet the drafts of the Calcutta Agents of Tea Companies, and that the practice as tending to prevent the establishment of Banks was an interference with the legitimate business of private traders in money, &c., issued orders prohibiting the issue of treasury drafts which were previously granted at a premium of eight annas or one-half per cent. These orders have been very hurtful to planters, and were considered by them to be extremely harsh, if not positively hostile, to tea planting interests; because planters had never objected to pay a higher premium, or whatever premium would have reimbursed Government for the cost of transporting silver to Assam to meet their drafts, and it was very well known to all conversant with the circumstances of Assam that there was no possibility, without the help of the Government balances, of a single Bank being established in the Province, whereas to meet their wants, one treasury at least was required in every District.

Expenditure of the Province; disproportionate outlay on Police and public works.

122. The gross expenditure in the Province I have been unable to make up from any published source, nor, after enquiry in various quarters, can I succeed in obtaining accurate and detailed information on the point. I omit therefore a table of expenditure, contenting myself with a few remarks on two heads—Public Works and Police—the outlay on each of which seems to be inversely proportionate to their importance; that on Police for 1863-64 being Rs. 4,47,937, and for public works, imperial and local, Rs. 3,19,186. In 1864-65 the outlay on Police was upwards of five lacs and a half* and on Public Works Rs. 3,14,640, or somewhat less than it was the year previous, although the revenues of the Province had increased by four lacs. Public Works, *i. e.*, roads and bridges are, without doubt, the crying want of Assam; but those which have been already projected, I fear, will progress but slowly, unless a somewhat larger amount of funds can be annually made available for this necessity than three lacs of Rupees.

* The Budget Estimate for 1865-66 is ten or twelve thousand Rupees only short of six lacs of Rupees, or a sum not very far short of the whole Land Revenue of the Province.

New Police ought to be abolished as being too expensive.

123. As for the new Police I am inclined to believe that the sooner it is abolished the better it will be for the Province. Its existence—now for three years—has certainly not resulted in that sense of security to life and property on the part of the European community which, as encouraging permament residence, it is so desirable to maintain; on the contrary, wherever

I went, I found but one opinion to prevail—that as a body the Police of Assam was utterly worthless as a means of external defence; and for the purposes of maintaining internal peace and good order, a very doubtful improvement on that which it replaced; in addition to which it seems to be more than suspected that their proceedings are not always unaccompanied by a considerable amount of oppression; and these opinions have, to a very great extent, been confirmed by the official reports lately received from the Civil Authorities of the Province. But though worthy of every consideration, it is not on these grounds that I venture to express an opinion unfavorable to the new Police in Assam, as the Government is doubtless far better informed than I can be as to its efficiency or inefficiency; but simply on the grounds of its enormous cost in proportion to the revenues of the Province, the urgent call for funds to meet other more immediate and pressing demands, and the total absence of all necessity—to say nothing of its unsuitableness—for a highly organized system of Military Police in a country the population of which is in an archaic stage of civilization.

Feeling of insecurity among the Europeans, extreme opinions regarding Military defence of Frontier.

124. And as I have alluded to that feeling of insecurity which I believe to prevail, to some extent, amongst the European community in Assam, I may here make some remarks regarding the Military defence of our Eastern Frontier and our position in relation to the numerous hill tribes by which the Province is in a measure hemmed in. I am aware that opinions differ, both as regards the character and physique (from a Military point of view) of these tribes, and the policy that should guide our treatment of them. Some represent the majority as weak and cowardly races, and the minority as rude and treacherous savages, who, if bold in their attacks on defenceless villagers, are contemptible enemies who would fly in terror before the very sound of musketry; holding these opinions they recommend that our efforts should be directed to attempting to gain an ascendency over them by moral influence, exerted under the protection of the local Police. Others, again, represent the circumstances of the North-East Frontier as somewhat similar to those of the Punjáb, and the majority of the border races as powerful and warlike tribes, requiring a well-organized system of defence, with a cordon of strong Military posts to keep them in check.

The truth lies midway between those extremes.

125. But as is usually the case with extreme opinions, the truth, in all probability, will be found to be very nearly midway between them. The position on the Punjáb Frontier, as regards

the races we have to deal with, is certainly in no respect similar to the position on the North-East Frontier. The Affghans are well clothed, well fed, and well armed, they have strong religious and strong clannish feelings, and, they and their ancestors, have been accustomed to war with disciplined troops from the days of Alexander the Great to those of Runjeet Singh and the Earl of Ellenborough. To compare, then, the hill tribes of the North-East Frontier with such men shews, in my humble opinion, a want of knowledge of the character of one or other of these races, or perhaps of both, which, seeing the little knowledge that can be obtained of matters regarding Assam less difficult to ascertain, and the great distance of Bengal from both East and West Frontiers, is perhaps not to be wondered it. With the exception of the Bútiahs, who have a Government and the nucleus of a regular and tolerably well equipped army, the rest are rude savages. Yet are they no more contemptible than the Maories of New Zealand, nor would it be prudent, as a measure of defence, to trust to Police recruited from local sources. It must not be supposed that, because a Detachment of the Assam Police, under Lieutenant Macdonald, did tolerably good service the other day at Dewangiri, the Assam Police would, as a body, ever prove very efficient if employed in doing the work of regular soldiers. This Detachment was recruited from the men of the old Kámrúp Regiment, which was disbanded a few years ago, and which had been brought into a high state of discipline by its Commandant, Major Drew. But all the Police of any country cannot be, nor is it necessary or desirable that they should be, disciplined soldiers, and were it otherwise, the Assam Police, being composed chiefly of Cácháries, Jerwahs, and Assamese, are not likely to have very warlike tendencies. An Abor, a Nágá, a Singfoo, or even an Aká or a Dufla, looks with supreme contempt upon a Cáchári, an Assamese, or any man of the plains; and one of the latter, though armed with a musket and bayonet, will not face one of these fighting races unless under strong pressure. The Angámi Nágá tribe alone are computed to number 100,000 souls, of whom 20,000 at least are able-bodied fighting men. At present the whole Military force available for the protection of a Frontier, some four or five hundred miles in length, is one Regiment of Local Infantry and a Company of Native Artillery, the head-quarters of which are at Díbrúghur. Were the necessity to arise, they could not of course do it, and consequently the whole of the Districts of Luckimpúr and Síbságur are at the mercy of these tribes, who might at any time sweep down into the plains, massacre every European out of Díbrúghur, and destroy all the tea gardens in these Districts; and the danger lies in this, that,

as mentioned above, (paragraph 18) they know it. I think it extremely improbable that they *will* do so; but all existing arrangements for the protection of the lives and property of British subjects in the Province are now made on the conviction that they will *not*, and although as long as the duty of the Indian Government was confined to protecting the miserable remnants of a population we had so lately relieved from the oppression of their Burmese conquerors, such a provision may have been sufficient, the question is, can it be held to be an adequate one now that the circumstances of the Province are so materially altered?

General principles of the policy best suited for dealing with hill tribes.

126. The situation, it appears to me, is not one regarding which there is very great difficulty in arriving at a just conclusion. The principal tribes are, as stated, rude, barbarous and ignorant, strong, treacherous, revengeful and *poor*. We can enter into no treaties with them, because we have no solid guarantee that they will observe their engagements. The only course open to us is the adoption of a system of rewards and punishments. Thus we may pay them subsistence money, or black-mail as it is called, as we now do, though on so much more liberal a scale as will render its stoppage an effective measure of coercion; we may admit them to the privilege of trading with the plains, on which really and truly many of them are dependent for the necessaries of life; we can encourage Missionaries to go amongst them, *supplementing their funds by grants-in-aid*, and we can employ as many of those who will take service with us as will live in the plains. If they still make raids into our Provinces, plunder our villages, and kill our people, we may first stop our payments; or, secondly, we may confine them to their hills; and in the event of both these measures failing, we must then chastise them severely. And this should be a last resource, because these people are ignorant and superstitious, and know not what they do; and secondly, because the climate of Assam being peculiar and tropical, the tree and grass jungle is so dense that it renders the hills almost impracticable for Military operations, and herein lies the wild tribes' greatest strength and our greatest weakness. At the same time, when necessity for proceeding to this extremity arises, it will not be questioned by any person of the smallest experience of the character of Asiatics, or of all barbarous tribes, that a Military force maintained for the purpose should be at hand to inflict the punishment deserved *promptly*, and that it should be of sufficient strength to discharge this duty *efficiently*. For the rest, the question is one for the immediate

consideration of the Military Authorities; and I need only add that, whatever the strength of the Force, it should consist, for the most part, of men accustomed to hill warfare and rough work, if it be possible to get such who will stand the climate of Assam, and not of men inferior in physique and courage to those they will have to coerce. And in addition to Native Infantry, there should be at least a Wing of a European Regiment and two Mountain Train Batteries, and a detail of guns should be attached to the head-quarters of each Regiment.

Education—small progress made; labors of the American Missionaries; their Printing Establishment, Books and Newspapers.

127. In speaking of the wants of Assam, there is one want which, intimately connected as it ever must be with the material progress of nations, and the moral, intellectual and social welfare of peoples, I ought to have sooner noticed,—Education. Little, very little, has been done in this Department in Assam; and unless it be a charge on the imperial revenues, little, I fear, can be done for some time to come. For the people are naturally too indolent, and yet too low down in the social scale to exert themselves beyond what is necessary to procure them the means of living and wherewithal to gratify their passion for opium. They are thus unable to contribute anything towards the education of their children, and for the present, whatever surplus revenue Government may be able to command, it is imperatively necessary that it should be spent upon Public Works. With the exception of one or two, I saw no schools that were worthy of being called educational institutions, and so barren did the Province appear in this respect that the Department can boast of little more than a name. The Officer in charge of the Department, Mr. Murray, I had not the pleasure of meeting.* He is highly spoken of, however, and I have no doubt will do his best; but he has many and great obstacles to overcome, in the indolence, apathy and ignorance of the people, their agricultural occupations,† the absence of any upper or middle class, and the want of funds. As far as I could gather, whatever has been done in Assam in this Department, has been done for the most part by Missionaries, chiefly American, and of these I cannot speak in terms of too high praise. The labors of the excellent Mr. Branson and his coadjutors at Nowgong, who for thirty years have gone amongst the hill tribes, principally the Mikirs, living with them and instruct-

* I regret to say that this Officer has since fallen a victim to malaria.

† Very young children are employed in tending cattle and fishing, and any number can find remunerative employment in picking tea-leaves.

ing them, are highly creditable; and I was grieved to find when I visited them, that notwithstanding the Mission was suffering so severely from the protracted struggle between North and South, which for the last four years has disunited and distracted their country, that its stability was in danger; the small funds these earnest and pious men could muster for their good work were, notwithstanding their remonstances, still further diminished by exactions on account of income tax. Of this they complained very bitterly, and I am ashamed to say that one venerable gentleman complained also of positive discourtesy. The Mission have an Establishment, with an excellent Printing Press at Síbságur, under the superintendence of Mr. Ward, which has done more real good than all the efforts of Government. It is the only Printing Establishment in the whole Province, and here the few Assamese books that exist have been printed and published. Besides books, moreover, a very admirable newspaper in Assamese is issued from this Press weekly. This paper is not only illustrated; it is also remarkably well edited, and appeared to me to be in advance of everything else in the Province. It has been in circulation for twenty years, and is largely read and apparently really appreciated by all who can afford to take it in. I subscribe for a number for each of my factories, and I was much pleased to see some fifteen or twenty coolies assemble nightly, of their own accord, after their day's work was done, to hear the Mohurir read it to them.

Combination of Government and Missionary efforts in the Department of Education objectionable as a general rule—exception in favor of Assam.

128. I have never been an advocate for the combination of Government and Missionary efforts in the cause of education—not because I am in any sense hostile to Missionaries, but, *firstly*, because I think that, looking to our position in India, such combination is liable to be misinterpreted; and *secondly*, because the object of both cannot everywhere be identical. What is simply a means with one is the end with the other; or, in other words, what is the principal business of the one is not, and ought not to be, the business of the other at all. But if assistance can be legitimately extended to Missionaries, unhampered by the Rules prevailing for grants-in-aid in Bengal, the American Missionaries in Assam are worthy of the fullest confidence of Government, and, if aided, would be an efficient medium for extending the benefits of education to many thousands who, if left to the Education Department, will not, I fear, derive its advantages for many years to come. I have no wish to draw any invidious distinctions, but I cannot help remarking that it is to the honor of this Mission

that, while Missionaries of other countries and persuasions have neglected their calling to engage in the more profitable business of tea planting, and some have given up the Mission altogether to follow it, I have not heard that one of them has so fallen away. The Americans have already obtained a small grant-in-aid from Government, but it is strictly confined to their efforts on behalf of the Mikirs, although in Lower Assam, where they would have had perhaps hundreds of Assamese village schools, had they had the means, there is not one solitary Government school. Some there were, but they have died out one after the other, leaving the station school, such as it is, the sole educational institution in the District. This again is attended only by those who seek to gain employment about the courts and as factory mohurirs. The people—the ryots—have not yet been reached.

Substitution of Bengali for Assamese in schools for primary instruction, a fatal error.

129. In regard to the Government Educational Department, again, a fatal error has been committed in substituing the Bengali language for Assamese, which is the vernacular of the people. Both languages borrow from the Sanskrit largely, and there is consequently much similarity between them; but they are nevertheless so distinct as to cause the speakers of the one to be unintelligible to the speakers of the other. It may have been thought that because Bengali is the vernacular of Bengal, it ought to be the language of the courts of Assam, and because it is the language of the courts it ought to be the language of the schools, but if such was the idea it is a mistaken one. According to the ordinances of Government, the language of the courts ought to be the vernacular of the Province, or the greater portion of it, and as regards Government schools, the term in ordinary use for primary instruction, *viz.*, "Vernacular Education," is sufficiently definite. With more reason perhaps we may assume that the mistake originated in the erroneous impression that modern Assamese is a corrupt dialect of the Bengali, for the character of the language satisfactorily established, there could be no difficulty in making the division into upper, middle, and lower schools, teaching English and Bengali, Bengali and Assamese, and Assamese alone. Bengali as the language of the neighbouring Provinces, of a class in the Province itself, and as most useful for the purposes of intercourse, accounts and trade, ought by no means to be excluded from a Government system of education; but it ought to take its own proper place, and not be allowed to displace the language of the great body of the people, either in the courts of justice or the Government schools for primary education.

And the effect of this displacement of the language of the people, I know, is very much felt in Upper Assam, where the influence of Bengali on the language has not been so very marked as in the lower parts of the Province.

The money spent on education recovered by the reduced expenditure on Police, Jails, &c., the impolicy of the extra-mural system of Jail labor in Assam.

130. Few things can be of greater importance in the administration of a country than the subject I have above treated of. Some are of opinion that high intellectual culture tends to demoralization and the increase of crime; and there can be little doubt that in some respects, and especially in regard to certain classes of crimes, this is perfectly true; but a glance at an education map of England, and an examination of the statistics of crime, will satisfy any one of the material influence education has on its extent in that country, and we may assume similar results, I hope, of other countries. And this from the Government stand-point is the most practical view of the subject; because a diminution of crime resulting from an improved moral tone of society implies a reduction in expenditure in the judicial and magisterial branches of the public service, the police and the jail establishments, one at least of which in Assam I have shewn to be disproportionately high. Of the jails, or the expenditure upon them, I cannot say much, as I have no statistics at hand. I visited two, the Tezpore and Díbrúghur Jails, the latter of which more than pays all its expenses chiefly from the proceeds of a tea plantation which the jail authorities have made, and which is worked by the prisoners. But the principal reason why I allude specially to jails in this paper is to express my surprise, that,—while the public service and all private undertakings are prostrated in consequence of the paucity of laborers; while thousands of human beings die annually for want of hands to effect an efficient system of bunding the rivers and draining the country; while Government are, as shewn above, importing laborers at a prime cost, including deaths and runaways, of not less than £12 a head, and a monthly wages of Rupees 8,—the intra-mural labor system should be introduced into the jails of Assam, and that, in the present state of the Province, I should have found able-bodied prisoners,—who might have been employed in making roads and building bridges,—pounding arrowroot and picking tea-leaves. There may be, in fact there *are*, serious objections to the out-door laboring of prisoners in India, and as long as bribery is rife, which, I fear, it will be to the end of our time and long afterwards, these objections will remain, but the Grand Trunk Road from Calcutta to

Peshawur, which is about fifteen hundred miles in length, and is perhaps the finest work of its kind in the whole world, is an instance of what may be effected by jail labor; and any system, however defective, by means of which such a result has been obtained in our oldest Provinces, is good enough for a Province in which, according to the official report of Mr. Mills, the proportion of jungle and waste to cultivated land is 17 to 1.

Importance of the Commission for the Civil Administration of the Province being efficient; the opinions I express on the subject I am alone responsible for.

131. But assuming us to be in complete and firm Military possession of Assam, the next important—the most important—matter as regards the welfare of the Province, it appears to me, is the efficiency of the Commission appointed to administer its affairs. I am aware that in dealing with this part of the subject some caution is necessary, lest it appear that I am criticising the acts of the Authorities; but I am dealing with measures, not men—with institutions, be they good or bad, and not the founders or supporters of them, and what I desire to compass is, to show in how far they seem *to me* suitable, or the reverse, for a Province the circumstances of which being so different to the circumstances of most other parts of India, cannot, I believe, be well understood by those who have not made themselves personally acquainted with them. The opinions I express are those of an individual, and may be received *quantum valeant*.

Non-regulation system most suitable for newly acquired Provinces in India; reason why this is the case.

132. I have before animadverted on the little influence possessed by the Civil Authorities of Assam in the Province, and stated that, in doing so, I did not desire to attribute blame to any one, and, if for no other cause, it is on that account desirable that I should here give my reasons for coming to that conclusion. They are simple. In my humble judgment the system of Government which is being applied to the Province is altogether unsuited to its present requirements. It is a practice in India, which has been found to answer so well as to have almost attained to the fixity of a rule, that newly acquired Provinces should be governed by a Commission, purely Military or mixed, as the case necessitates, untrammelled by the fetters of a regular code of laws. And the advantages of such a system must be obvious, *first*, because it is plain that a people long accustomed even to the best Native rule require to *see* the authority by which they are governed, and cannot readily understand a system worked from a distant centre, which, as beset with forms, is so opposed to anything

that they have been previously accustomed to; *secondly*, because the Officers of such a Commission have usually such numerous and multifarious duties to perform, that were they obliged to devote their attention to the strict observance of all the forms of procedure regulation law requires, they could find no time to do any *real* work; *thirdly*, because Officers well acquainted with Company's Regulations, or the exigencies attending annexation, can never be obtained in sufficient numbers; *fourthly*, because in new and unsettled Provinces, and especially in those Provinces which border on a Frontier, subordinate Officers are frequently called upon to act with promptitude, to accept responsibilities which Officers are not required to undertake elsewhere, and, at all times, to exercise such strong personal influence throughout their Districts as to be able to effect by it alone that which in older Provinces is accomplished by machinery, the benefits of which, on account of its expense, they cannot hope to obtain. As a rule, no new Province in British India has *at first* paid its own expenses, and when such can be said of the country of the five rivers, it would be folly to expect it of a Province upwards of nine-tenths of which is primitive jungle. Before then, we can hope for any large extension of the machinery of good government in any Province under similar circumstances, its rich resources must first be developed, and until that takes place some compensating balance must be supplied; and I know of no other than the adoption of a system which, while it invests the Civil Authorities with such powers as will insure their being honored and respected by the people, and such responsibilities as will deter them from exercising those powers capriciously, or otherwise than for the good of the people, at the same time offers such prospects of advancement to the deserving, as will insure for the Queen's service the benefit of their best energies and abilities. These opinions will grate on the ear of some, probably, but after all if we examine the question what will we find it to be?—simply one of £. *s. d.* A Government with a complicated system, and an elaborate machinery to work it, must be prepared for a very large expenditure of public money, if it desires to keep this machinery in good order. A Government, whatever the system, which can afford to supply only a rude and imperfect machinery, must be satisfied with simple rules, to work which what is required are—a strong will and the power to enforce it. Attempt the former without the necessary ways and means, and bankruptcy will be sure to follow; essay the latter by the aid of an elaborate system of laws and regulations alone, and stagnation, if not retrogression, or it may be rebellion, will be the inevitable result.

133. And if these principles be applied to Assam, not theoretically, but practically and honestly, it will be found, I opine, that they are fully borne out by the existing state of things. We have the chief town,—it would be ludicrous to dignify it with the appellation of the capital, as shewn in the opening of this Memorandum, having regard to facilities of communication,—further from the seat of Government than New York, St. Petersburgh, or Constantinople are from London; and this *centre*, if I may be permitted the use of so paradoxical a term, is not only three times further from the most northern station in the Province, than it is from Madras, Lahore, or Bombay, but positively almost as far from it as it is from England. We have a Commissioner on the spot with, I may say, no executive power at all, and consequently invested with simply routine responsibility, and it must follow as a corollary, no separate and personal interest in the success of the measures devised for the good government of the Province, many if not most of which are ordered and carried out in opposition to his views. And this latter is not to be wondered at, because, as I have clearly shewn, the state of the country, the land tenure, the condition, habits, manners and customs of the people, are wholly distinct from those of other parts of Bengal, and cannot be understood by those whose official experience is confined to that Province alone. Yet the smallest matter, the lease or sale even of a grant, often out of six or seven millions acres of waste land, to a tea planter, must percolate through him to the Board of Revenue in Calcutta, and be sent back again before it can be finally sanctioned.* It is needless to attempt to demonstrate that such a state of things involves endless delays, or in other words causes, in the development of the Province's natural wealth, positive obstruction. Indeed so seriously have Departments in Calcutta been beset by the evils resulting from this sytem of straggling centralization, that the exigencies of the public service have necessitated the appointment of a Judicial Commissioner for the Province, and the Principal Engineer, the Deputy Inspector-General of Police, and to some extent, I believe, the Inspector of Schools for Assam, being invested with the powers of Heads of Departments. Thus, placed in direct communication with the Government of Bengal, *these* Departments have been rendered more useful, but being independent of the Commissioner, unfortunately this advantage has been gained at a sacrifice of his efficiency and that of the entire civil administration of the Province, which undoubtedly requires strengthening, not weakening.

Serious defects of the Commission; the Commissioner.

* Some modification of the orders on this subject have been made since this was written.

BENGAL

The Deputy Commissioner; the extraordinary duties he is called on to perform and the impossibility of his discharging them satisfactorily.

134. Turning to the Commissioner's Lieutenants, let us first examine the duties and responsibilities of a Deputy Commissioner and the aid he is afforded in discharging them. He is the Civil Judge, Collector, Controller of the Post, (though now relieved of the office duties of Post-master,) Road-maker, Political Officer, District Registrar, and a score of other things besides. He hears all Civil appeals from the decisions of Officers exercising the powers of Sudder Ameens and Moonsiffs, and tries all original suits involving more than Rupees 300 instituted at the Sudder Station, if there be, as is not unusual, only a Moonsiff at the head-quarters of the District. In the Criminal Department, he is the only Officer with full powers at the Sudder Station, and often he is the only Officer in the District so empowered. Sometimes the Deputy Commissioner is assisted by an English Extra Assistant and a Moonsiff, but, when I was in Assam, the Extra Assistants with the exception of one, I believe, had passed no examinations and could not be expected to do any work in the Judicial Department. They therefore did none, and a Moonsiff, if a first class subordinate Magistrate, tries petty cases only. The Deputy Commissioner, therefore, does all the important Criminal work at the Sudder Station added to all his other duties, and is the only Officer able to try a case requiring more than six months' imprisonment, or one involving breach of contract by a cooly. At Gowhatty there is a Deputy Collector, and in some Districts there are Sub-Divisions (three or four in the whole Province, I think, at Mungle Dye, Gola Ghât, Assaloo, and a place in Luckimpore, the name of which I do not recollect,) where there is an Assistant Commissioner and a Sudder Ameen, the Assistant Commissioner so employed, passed or unpassed, has the full powers of a Magistrate, and the Sudder Ameen those of a subordinate Magistrate. In the Revenue Department the Deputy Commissioner is almost unaided. One of the above-mentioned Officers is generally a Deputy Collector, but his jurisdiction is very limited; and his distance from the Sudder Station (Gola Ghât is 64 miles from Síbságur, and Assaloo, for six months in the year, is altogether inaccessible from Nowgong) makes it impossible to refer cases to him. He therefore affords the Deputy Commissioner but nominal aid. Again, the ordinary Revenue work of Deputy Commissioners has been enormously increased by the new Rules for the sale of Waste Lands, and by the litigation which has arisen out of such sales in consequence of the country being unsurveyed; to say nothing of the loss of time involved in correspondence, and the number of Europeans trans-

acting business personally with the Deputy Commissioner. Government has admitted the increase of work thrown on Deputy Commissioners from this cause; but the aid afforded in this instance, *viz.*, permission to employ an extra Clerk on Rs. 50 a month seems hardly sufficient; and when to these duties are added the Deputy Commissioner's Judicial and Executive work, it will be admitted that it would be difficult for him to perform them with satisfaction to Government, the people, or himself, even were he unhampered with the heavy office duties at present required of him in the preparation of periodical returns, statements, and reports. But I have not yet done with enumerating the duties required of this unfortunate Officer. In Bengal, Collectors have to deal with Zemindars, whereas in Assam the Deputy Commissioner, on behalf of Government, is himself the Zemindar, has to deal direct with every Ryot in the District, and is made answerable (though not pecuniarily) that the land revenue does not decrease. In this capacity he has to make from eighty to a hundred settlements annually, and for the efficient performance of this important duty he should personally visit each village to be settled, to test the measurements, and to dispose of boundary disputes. Again, to be even partially efficient, it cannot be denied that, not only for these purposes, but to make himself acquainted with the people and their requirements, he should make an annual tour through his District; and when it is known that the average area of a District in Assam is from 3,000 to 5,000 square miles, and its average length from a hundred to a hundred-and-fifty miles, it becomes evident that this is a work that cannot be accomplished within a few days or even weeks. But were it otherwise, should a planter call at the Collector's Court to make any enquiries about his land, or to transact any other business during the absence of the Deputy Commissioner in the Mofussil, he would find no one competent to give him any help. And finally, should nothing else intervene to prevent the Deputy Commissioner from making a tour through his District, he has charge of the treasury at the Sudder Station, and this he is ordered not to make over to any one not competent to the charge without special sanction. But, in some instances, the most harassing work which has lately been heaped on the already overburthened Deputy Commissioner is that of inspecting the coolies who arrive at the different landing places by the river steamers. At Gowhatty, at Tezpúr, and Díbrúghur, which are situated on the banks of the main river, though the Deputy Commissioner cannot send any of the coolies back, or indeed further than serving as a check on the Labor Transport Service, cannot do any good, the inspection

involves no further inconvenience than necessitating his neglecting other important duties; but at Síbságur and Nowgong, which are inland stations, that a Deputy Commissioner should be compelled to attend at the several múkhs (river mouths) at which coolies may be landed,—where he must wait, without any shelter, for a day and a night or more, or keep the steamer waiting for him so long, to say nothing of the interruption such visitations must cause to all public business,—seems to indicate a want of consideration for this Officer which was certainly not contemplated when orders were issued on the subject. A journey during the rains from Síbságur to Dhunsiri Múkh, which is the chief landing place for that district, to a Deputy Commissioner not thoroughly acclimatized might cost him his life. And very many, if not all, of these duties are rendered tenfold more arduous by the want of roads and the impracticable nature of the country.

Deputy Commissioners in Assam not furnished by Government with the means of moving about their Districts.

135. And as the strongest proof that the true circumstances of this Province cannot be generally known, or that district Officers are not expected to discharge their duties efficiently, I would adduce the fact that, from the Commissioner down to the lowest Assistant in the Province, no Civil Officer has been furnished by Government with the means of moving about his District. The very best high road in Assam, from the prevalence of jungle and the absence of bridges, can be traversed on elephants alone. Some few years ago elephants were so plentiful and cheap that they could be had for from £30 to £40 each, and a Deputy Commissioner might keep or hire them almost as cheaply as he could country ponies. Since tea planting, however, has been developed, and the price of a good elephant has risen from £30 to £300, things are materially altered. In those days elephant-catchers, and a few of the well-to-do Natives who kept many elephants, were only too happy to lend them to Civil Officers for little more than the cost of their keep; but in these days for a Deputy Commissioner to send a requisition to a Native for an elephant which he can sell or hire to a tea planter for almost any sum he pleases to ask, is to inflict on him a serious injury. Each Native Regiment has a detail of ten or twelve elephants; all tea planters of any status have their one or two, and some their five or six elephants; the Assam Company have twenty or thirty; and apart from considerations of efficiency it seems to me that to allow the sole representative of the Civil power in a District to be dependant on tea planters,

Natives, or any one else, for the means of discharging his most important duties is to place him in an ignominious and improper position. So however it is, and singular enough to say, that although it is so, and orders have lately been passed to sanction elephants for Districts in Assam, they are for the use of the District Superintendents of Police and not for that of Deputy Commissioners, so that while this Officer will still have to beg or borrow elephants to enable him to visit his District, or else be compelled to make his official tour mounted on his hill pony, his own subordinate will be provided by Government with the means of discharging the duties of his office efficiently and respectably.

Small blame to Deputy Commissioners in Assam if they fail to give satisfaction to any one, or to command the respect of the people.

136. If then such is the nature of the duties which are assigned to a Deputy Commissioner, and such their extent, he can hardly be blamed if unaided, or almost unaided, he fails to discharge them efficiently or satisfactorily. Still less can he be found fault with for not possessing influence in his District, when he is deprived of all those attributes which amongst a primitive and illiterate people, and rude and savage tribes, are necessary to command respect.

The Commissioner's steamer: mischievous effects of steaming up and down the Brahmaputra: the Lieutenant-Governor's tour.

137. It is true that a steamer has lately been placed at the disposal of the Commissioner of Assam to enable him to move about the Province; but it is just this moving up and down the Brahmaputra which, I venture to think, has had a mischievous effect in Assam. Every Government Officer who has officially visited Assam has done so in this manner. Mr. Mills, the Special Commissioner appointed to report on the Province in 1854; Lieutenant-Colonel Bruce, the Controller-General of Police; Mr. Atkinson, the Director-General of Public Instruction; General Showers, the General Commanding the Presidency Division, and lastly, Sir Cecil Beadon, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, all made their official tours through Assam in the rains. This is the best time to do so in some respects, because in the rainy season Assam is generally very much cooler than Bengal; the tea gardens are in full leaf, and the river air is always invigorating and healthy. Steaming up and down the river again is more pleasant than travelling hundreds of miles on the back of an elephant; but it is not the best mode of travelling for one who wishes to make himself acquainted with the true circumstances of the country and the condition of the people. Any person simply sailing up and down the Brahmaputra might readily return to Bengal

with the impression that the whole Province was a desolate waste completely devoid of population, for excepting the two or three Government Civil Stations situated on the river banks there is hardly the vestige of a human habitation to be seen; and such would have been the impression left on the Lieutenant-Governor's mind, I was informed, had he not fortunately been able to steam up the Kullung, the high banks of which, to his astonishment, he found covered with villages, which were crowded with people.

Officers of the Commission dissatisfied with their lot—causes for it.

138. Another point in regard to the Assam Commission which, although it partakes in a measure of the personal, has too important a bearing on the welfare of the Province and the success of the measures that may be devised for its better government to be passed over altogether in silence. I allude to the symptoms of uneasiness regarding their position and future prospects, which unmistakably pervades the whole Commission. As far as I could gather from private conversation, it appeared to me that every Officer, from the Commissioner down to the Junior Assistant, seemed to have a grievance. With the grievances of individuals I have nothing to do; but without entering into private and special cases, I may say that the general feeling of the Civil Officers in Assam is not what it ought to be. They seem to think that while they are compelled to live in an out-of-the-way Province, a penal settlement as it is called, and in a very unhealthy climate, a place in which supplies are scarce and dear, and where there is very hard work, neither recreation nor society, and little opportunity of distinction; their promotion and prospects, their interests generally, are not so well cared for by Government as are those of other Commissions whose duties involve, if equal attention, a far lesser degree of hardship and deprivation in climates not so uncongenial to the European constitution. It is true that an improvement was made about two years ago when Assam, Cáchár, Chota Nagpore, and Darjeeling were thrown into one Commission having its grades of Commissioners, Judicial Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners and Assistants, with a graduated scale of salaries; but the scheme was altogether inharmonious and incongruous, the languages of Assam, Chota Nagpore and Darjeeling are not the same, and the experience gained in any one of these places would be of no practical service in the other. But what was considered a positive injustice was that at the first go off, on vacancies occurring in the higher appointments, such as Darjeeling and Kúch Behar, they were filled by outsiders, and young Civilians of a few years' standing were sent up to be placed in charge

of Districts in Assam who would not perhaps have had charge of Sub-Divisions in Bengal. It may be said that the paucity of old and experienced Officers in Assam necessitated this course; but how is it, after thirty years of administration, that there should be a paucity of Officers well qualified for higher appointments, if the service is popular? Is the climate *so* deadly that it has killed them all; or is it that, disappointed in their hopes, they have left the Commission? On enquiry I was told that some of the best Uncovenanted Officers had left the Commission to follow the profession of tea planting, and others had been removed for being interested in, or connected with, tea gardens;* and it must be borne in mind that the position of the Civil Officer in Assam is a very trying one. Within the last ten years he has seen many a young man, with perhaps but little education, and not a tithe of his abilities, come into the Province as an Assistant on a tea plantation, with a salary of Rs. 100 a month, and in six or seven years leave it with a fortune, while he remains in the same position as he was, still penniless. At the present moment, I believe, there is hardly a single Officer in the Commission, without private means, who is out of debt. It is not in human nature, under such circumstances, for Officers so situated, and with little prospect of advancement, not to draw comparisons unfavorable to the service of Government. It would be unpractical not to give due weight to these considerations, and though it may be thought improper in me noticing this subject at all, I do so advisedly, because I am convinced that that contentment among the Officers of every service, which arises from a feeling that their labors are appreciated by their employers, is one of the most essential elements in the success of all undertakings, whether they be private or public. It was this feeling, undoubtedly which developed energies and abilities in the Officers of the Commission appointed to administer the affairs of the Punjab, which, under other circumstances, might have lain dormant for ever, and when it ceases entirely to exist in the Civil and Military branches of the Government administration, from that hour the efficiency of the Queen's Service in India will materially decline.

* To such an extent had the decay of the Commission proceeded that when I visited Assam, Sibsagur, the District in which by far the largest amount of British capital has been invested, had been for nine months in charge of an Ensign, who entered the service after the Mutiny of 1857. Durrung was in charge of a Lieutenant of very little longer standing, and Nowgong in charge of a Civilian of less than four years' standing.

Desirability of adopting the non-regulation system in Assam.

139. Having said so much it is almost superfluous for me to add that the system of Government, the adoption of which I would venture to recommend as more suitable to the

present circumstances of Assam than that which at present prevails, is one somewhat similar to that which prevails in the Punjab and Central India. Such a change would perhaps not be popular with the European element in the Province, and as this is now considerable, and the number of European residents and the value of the property held by them is daily increasing, their opinions on this point are entitled to much consideration. But in the Kangra Valley there are at present a number of European planters, and I have already quoted the published opinion of the late Lieutenant-Governor regarding the perfect harmony that exists between the three estates, the Government, the planter, and the natives; and when we take into consideration the large number of outside Europeans, Railway Officials and others, which is to be found in the large cities of Lahore, Umritsur, Delhi, Simla, Mooltan, and the Military Cantonments of Umballa, Jullunder, Peshawur, &c., &c., who find no inconvenience whatever, but, I have no doubt, much benefit from residing in a Province not ruled by Regulation law, it will not appear that there ought to be any solid grounds on this score for denying rich and productive Provinces advantages which I feel confident cannot be obtained under a system which the experience of nearly forty years has clearly proved to be devoid of the essential elements of progress. Again, the main points of interest to Europeans in Assam are waste land sales and labor contracts, and these are regulated by special laws which need not be interfered with.

Necessity of strengthening and improving the personnel of the Commission, and how it should be done.

140. The Commission undoubtedly requires strengthening, and perhaps improving, and without in any way disparaging present incumbents, I need not conceal it: but by importing into it young Civilians of a few years' standing, and giving them charge of Districts in Assam, this end will hardly be obtained; for, at such time as their length of service qualifies them for similar charges in Bengal, as the salaries and prospects there are infinitely superior to anything that, under present circumstances, could be looked for in Assam, they will be certain to leave it. Indeed on no other terms, except the recognition of this privilege, could they be persuaded to enter the Assam Commission. But the result is a triple injury, *first*, to Assam in giving the charge of a District to an Officer whose age, experience, judgment, discretion, and knowledge of the language are not such as to qualify him for so important a duty; *secondly*, an almost similar injustice to Bengal on the re-transfer of this Officer to the charge of a District in that Province after he has acquired experience

in a Province the circumstances and language of which are quite distinct; and *thirdly*, the injustice done to their Military brethren of the Commission who, cut off from similar advantages, find a few coveted appointments conferred upon men who confessedly serve in Assam only as long as it suits their convenience. It must not be forgotten, moreover, that in consequence of the large and increasing European element in the Province, and the greater difficulty and importance of the cases brought before the Courts, it is especially old and experienced Officers that are wanting, and not young men, who are far more out of place in charge of a district in the Tea Districts of Assam than they would be anywhere in Bengal out of the Indigo Districts.

Opinion of M. Michel Chevalier, on the consequences of paying public servants badly.

141. And lest my opinion regarding the desirability of maintaining a feeling of contentment amongst a body of Officers situated as are the Civil Officers of the Assam Commission may not carry much weight, I venture to quote the remarks of Monsieur Michel Chevalier, one of the profoundest thinkers in Europe, on this subject:—"It is natural," he says, "that they who believe themselves insufficiently rewarded for the pains they bestow, and the services they render, should fall off in their devotion and slacken in their zeal. There may be exceptional cases of individuals who are above these worldly motives; but the majority bow to them, especially after a little time. We are not justified, after all, in requiring from functionaries all the activity and care which the business of the State demands, if we persist in paying them badly. Inadequate salaries deter numbers of men, who know their own value, from entering the public service, and drive them into private employments. The best of natures may, under such circumstances, become embittered. No one can be more inclined than myself to bear testimony to the disinterestedness of French functionaries. They are, at least, in this respect, upon a par with those of any other nation. But there is no reason why they should be subjected to the temptation which flows from straightened circumstances, and which has perverted the administrative morals of a certain great State which I could mention."

Justice to Assam and the varied interests involved in its welfare demand the appointment of a Chief Commissioner, and the necessary adjuncts of a separate Government.

142. Finally, if that justice is to be done to Assam, which its own natural wealth, the great advance in the Government revenues, the rapid development of its resources, and its increasing importance in a commercial point of view, all combine to demand, I see no other course open than the

creation of a Chief Commissionership, with all its necessary requirements. As to the desirability of such a change, I have shewn that the exigencies of the public service have already compelled the Government of Bengal to recognize it by creating appointments, and assigning to subordinate Officers the duties and responsibilities of Officers not sanctioned except for separate Governments, as pointed out in paragraph 133, so that in this respect it only remains to complete what has been already begun. The area of Assam alone is about double that of Oude, and the revenues from sources other than land are exactly the same,* but in consideration of the vast quantity of waste, and the sparseness of the population, it would be desirable to reconstruct the boundaries of the new Chief Commissionership, and with the addition of the newly acquired Dooars, Kúch Behar, Cáchár, (North and South,) Sylhet, and the District of Mymensing, the area and population of the Province would exceed those of British Burmah, and not fall very far short of the Central Provinces. Nor need the increase to the administrative staff immediately be very great. For the present, three Commissioners, one for Central and Upper Assam, one for Lower Assam, Kúch Behar and the Bútea Dooars, and one for North and South Cáchár, the Khasia and Jynteah Hills, Sylhet and Mymensing, with an addition of four Deputy Commissioners and double the number of young Assistants, would probably suffice. The Chief Commissioner, thus being relieved of a considerable portion of his present work, might, until the revenues reached a sufficient sum, take charge of finance, and a Judicial Commissioner already exists. These are details, however, into which I ought not to enter, because I have not the data, nor yet the local knowledge, to work them out properly. My conclusions are formed upon the broad basis that the Lieutenant-Governorship of Bengal, even without its Eastern Provinces, is altogether unweildy; and that although as long as we held Assam and Cáchár simply for the purpose of making the great mountain chain of the Himalayas, the North-Eastern frontier, not of Bengal, but of India, it may have been convenient to attach them to the nearest division of the Bengal Presidency; since it has been ascertained that these regions are rich in natural wealth and of great commercial importance to England as well as to India, and that they give good promise of becoming, at no distant date, flourishing and paying Provinces, it would be not only detrimental to the interests of

* The total revenues of Oude are Rs. 1,23,57,675. Of this sum the land and forest revenue is Rs. 1,04,77,691, leaving a balance, exclusive of income tax, (Rs. 3,03,221) of Rs. 15,76,763, against a balance of Rs. 15,61,746, in Assam. The land revenue in Assam is ten lacs, or less than one-tenth of that of Oude. The area of the former being 48,500, and of the latter 24,500 square miles.

the Empire, but positively unjust to the large private interests involved in the successful administration of their affairs, to suffer them longer to be the neglected *terra incognita* they have been since the day they came into our possession.

Cause of Bengal being formed into a Lieutenant-Governorship, comparison of the areas and populations of the minor Presidencies and several Local Governments.

143. The circumstances under which Bengal was formed into a Lieutenant-Governorship, and placed like the minor Local Governments of the North-Western Provinces, the Punjab, &c., under a single Civil Servant, are well known. It was found that so much of the Governor General's time was taken up with the administrative details of the separate Government, that he had not sufficient leisure to devote that attentive consideration to questions of Imperial and Foreign policy which their magnitude and importance demanded; and on the other hand that the amount of time and attention he was necessarily compelled to give to weighty and important matters of State policy, coupled with his frequent absence from the Lower Provinces, very seriously affected the efficiency of the Government of Bengal. As the limits of the Empire were extended, and the several nations which composed it rapidly progressed in material wealth and prosperity, to relieve the Governor General became gradually desirable, then urgent, and finally a pressing necessity, and the simplest mode of accomplishing the desired end was undoubtedly to detach Bengal in its integrity, though possibly a revised distribution of some of the Provinces of the Empire would have resulted in the formation of a more compact whole. I have no means of ascertaining the nature of the discussions which preceded this measure; but the table of areas and population given opposite, which, if not strictly accurate, is sufficiently nearly so for all practical purposes, will, I think, justify the conclusion here arrived at, *viz.*, that the existing division of the Indian Empire into Presidencies and

	Area in square miles.	Population.
* Bengal *including Behar and Orissa* †	183,846	38,103,427
Madras without *Native States* ...	132,090	22,437,297
Bombay *ditto ditto and Sindh* ...	67,945	10,021,305
North-West Provinces with Regulation Districts	6,060,507	25,344,481
The Punjab	100,106	14,794,611
The Central Provinces	120,149	7,787,500
Oudh	24,500	8,500,000
British Burmah	90,070	2,196,180
Sindh	55,699	1,747,971
Assam	48,400	1,750,000

* The areas for Madras and Bombay have been taken from a Parliamentary Report of 1857, and for Bengal from the latest Returns; the estimates of population of the three have been taken entirely from Thornton's Statistical Tables and Gazetteer. The areas and populations of the other Lieutenant-Governorships and Chief Commissionerships have, with the exception of the North-Western Provinces, been taken from Official Reports made this year (1865).

† This includes the plains of Chittagong and the Gurjhat Mehals of the South-West Frontier Agency; but excludes Assam and Hill States, Cachár, Jynteah, Sikhim, Kúch Behar and Sumbulpore.

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Provinces was made to conform to the circumstances attending each successive increase of territory; and that such readjustment of boundaries and reconstitution of executive administrations as will combine consolidation of power with economy, efficiency and good government has yet to be made.

Necessity of detaching Assam, Cachar, &c., from the Lieutenant-Governorship of Bengal, the same as that which existed for detaching Bengal from the Provinces under the direct administration of the Governor-General.

144. The last general return of areas and populations for each division of each Presidency furnished by Local Governments to the Government of India, gives the area of the Provinces under the direct administration of the Governor General of India in Council, including Oude, Nagpore, Pegu, the Tenasserim Provinces, Coorg, and the Straits Settlements as 170,000 square miles, and the population 141,65,161 souls. This is not, however, I think, quite correct, they are somewhat more. The same return gives the area of the whole of the Provinces under the administration of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, in-cluding Assam and Cáchár and the other Districts which have been excluded from the Statement given above, as 280,199square miles, and the population 41,498,608; and they are certainly not less. We thus see that the territories under the direct administration of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal are infinitely more extensive in area than those under the Governor General of India in Council, and contain a population nearly three times as great; that the area and population are about double those of the whole Presidency of Madras without its Native States, and similarly *four times* greater than the area and population of the whole Presidency of Bombay, exclusive of Sindh. The Governors of Madras and Bombay have Executive Councils to aid them in the administration of Civil affairs, and Commanders of the Forces to give them counsel and advice in Military matters. Bengal, partly from climatic influences, and partly from the neglect consequent on its great extent, is, in the Department of Public Works and in some other respects, behind other very much more recently acquired Provinces; but as regards the education of the upper classes, and the comparatively very large number of European landholders and residents, it is considerably in advance of any other part of India. These and other circumstances combined necessitate the machinery for the Government of this overgrown Province being more highly efficient, and with a single head to direct and control the administration of territories so vast as those attached to the Lieutenant-Governorship of Bengal, it is not surprising that complaints should sometimes be made, and that portions of Bengal should afford evident signs of neglect. There can be

very little doubt that Bengal Proper has immensely benefitted by its detachment from the territories under the control of the Government of India, and that within the last eight or ten years a very great advance in good government has taken place, but there can be as little doubt that the same causes which, in relation to Bengal, rendered a disconnection from the supreme Authority desirable are gradually being developed within Bengal itself in relation to some of its outlying Provinces; and that a regard for the interests and revenues of the Empire necessitate the formation of a fourth Presidency or its dismemberment.*

Statements shewing the comparative gross revenues of the minor Presidencies and surplus available for Imperial purposes; revenues of Bengal a third of the revenues of the whole Empire.

145. A good Budget has tided many a Government administration over a crisis, and comparing smaller with greater things, good dividends have oftener rendered a constituency well pleased with their direction. The gross revenues of the territories under the administration of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal are a third of the revenues of the whole Empire, and as the following table, which I have compiled from the Statements of finance and accounts presented to Parliament in May last, shews, the surplus remaining for Imperial purposes after payment of all charges, is greater than the surplus afforded by the two minor Presidencies and all the other Local Governments put together.

Abstract Return of the total Revenues and Charges for the year 1863-64 *of the various Presidencies, and Divisions of Presidencies, under the Government of India.*

Number.		Area.†	Population.†	Land Revenue.	Total Revenue.	Expenditure.	Surplus	Deficit
		Square Miles.	Souls.	£	£	£	£	
1	Bengal	261,383	40,829,511	4,044,241	15,007,117	5,871,148	9,135,969	
2	North-West Provinces	84,370	28,069,572	4,018,497	5,455,052	2,095,105	3,359 947	
3	Oude	27,890	8,071,075	1,007,346	1,184,666	694,454	490,212	
4	Punjab	100,406	14,794,611	1,946,427	3,188,071	1,549,430	1,638,641	
5	Bombay including Sindh and North Canara	139,893	12,179,180	3,460,765	8,215,717	7,263,280	952,437	
6	Central Provinces ...	108,650	6,678,695	546,605	874,085	732,025	141,460	
7	East and West Berar	16,556	1,100,328	355,787	427,414	189,745	287,669	
8	Madras	126,400	22,886,183	4,299,792	7,029,279	6,279,751	749,528	
9	Eastern Settlements..	1,198	273,741	13,260	194,582	130,119	64,463	
10	British Burmah ...	81,416	1,732,844	525,340	947,948	521,793	426,155	

* The arrangements for the better distribution and control of the Armies of India might then be re-considered. That the Army of the Madras Presidency should be so large, and that both it and the Bombay Army should have a separate Military Government after the Railway system is completed would be absurd.

† The areas and populations here given are taken from the Financial Statements presented to Parliament in May last, and will not tally with those previously given, which, as regards Local Government (the North-Western Provinces excepted), are compiled from later data, and are, I assume, the more correct.

146. It is the popular belief based upon data obtainable from Returns similar to the above that the administration of Bengal is highly satisfactory, and we are consequently accustomed to see each Annual Report of the Bengal Government favorably reviewed in the Indian Journals; but a very partial examination of the details of the accounts shews that any conclusion from an Imperial point of view, which is based on these figures, must be highly fallacious. In the first instance, to obtain any accurate comparative result, the Opium revenue from both Bengal and Bombay must be deducted as altogether abnormal, and depending on the adjustment of the supply and on circumstances altogether beyond the control of administrators in India. Bengal again must be debited with a portion of the expenses on account of the Army proportionate to her area, population, and extent of frontier. The Regiment of Infantry and Battery of Artillery cantoned at Peshawur is, as a matter of course, stationed there as much for the protection of Bengal and the Bengalees as for any other part or people of India; and, on the other hand, the Upper and Western Provinces of the Bengal Presidency must be credited with a proportionate share of the nett revenues derived from Customs, Stamps, Law and Justice. It would be a matter of some difficulty, therefore, to prepare a Statement that would fairly represent the financial results of the administration of the Lower Provinces as compared with the other divisions of the Bengal Presidency, but an idea, probably more accurate than that which the public at present entertains, may be obtained by a comparison of the financial results obtained in these Provinces with those obtained in one of the other Presidencies. For this purpose let us take Madras, that Presidency commonly called the "Benighted," and striking off from Bengal the revenue obtained from Opium we have a balance of £9,761,331 against £7,029,279, or a difference only of £2,731,052; but the area of the territories under the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal is two-hundred-and-sixty to two-hundred-and-eighty thousand square miles, and the population upwards of forty millions, while the area of Madras is only one-hundred-and-twenty-six to one-hundred-and-thirty thousand square miles, and the population twenty-two millions. If again we turn to Bombay, the comparative deficiency of revenue for Bengal will be more apparent still, for deducting the Opium revenue from *both* sides, we have a difference of only £2,031,837, although the area of Bengal is more than double that of Bombay *including* Sindh, and

The popular belief that the revenues derived from Bengal are disproportionately greater than those derived from Madras and Bombay, a popular error.

the population *three-and-a-half* times greater. Areas are certainly the weakest of all tests, for it is quite plain that 100 acres of well peopled and well cultivated land ought to produce more revenue than 100,000 acres of unpeopled waste land. It is on the greater population of Bengal therefore, combined with the extraordinary richness of the soil, moisture of its climate, and other influences favorable to a high rate of productiveness, that I base my conclusion that, comparatively, the gross revenues of the Lower Provinces of Bengal are much less than those of Madras or Bombay. And it is difficult to over-estimate the increase in the revenues we are justified in looking for from the simple population point of view. In one item alone, *Salt*, the difference between the revenues of Bengal and Bombay (about £2,000,000*) is equal to the entire difference between the revenues of these Presidencies excluding Opium, leaving the revenues of Bengal with its immense area and its population of forty-one millions, swelled as they are with the receipts for Customs, Stamps, Law and Justice on account of Upper India, no greater than those of Bombay, the population of which, including Sindh, is only twelve millions.

* Bengal	...	£2,439,926
Bombay	...	£484,438
Difference	...	£1,955,488

Bengal that part of India from which the greatest increase of revenue may be looked for.

147. The conclusion I wish to draw from these figures is, that instead of congratulating the country on the immense revenue derived from the territories under the administration of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, it is to this division of the Bengal Presidency we have a right to look for the largest annual increase. The land revenue in a very large portion of it, it must never be forgotten, has unfortunately been fixed for ever, and in the table given above, (para. 145) for the facility of comparison with areas, I have added the revenue derived from this source in a separate column.

Application of the foregoing remarks to the Tea Districts of Bengal. Impossibility of a Government making the prosperity of a nation, not inconsistent with the possibility of its doing something to repair the effects of past errors.

148. For this reason, taking into consideration the fact that half the revenues of the whole Empire are made up from *land*, the administration of those Provinces of Lower Bengal in which the tenure of land has not yet been irrevocably fixed is invested with singular importance, and now that the retention of seventy or eighty thousand British soldiers in India is a recognized necessity, the Supreme Government, with whom rests the responsbility of finding the ways and means for the maintenance of this Army, however overburthened, can no longer *afford* to allow the wealth of rich Provinces to remain